The Middlebury Campus

VOL. CXXIV, No. 21 | MIDDLEBURY, VERMONT, APRIL 30, 2026 | middleburycampus.com

ZEITGEIST 2026

Introduction: The spirit of the times, unstable

By ELLIE TRINKLE
Senior Arts & Culture Editor

In a year marked by political rigidity, global violence and immense grief, it is hard for Middlebury students not to feel the weight of all the issues that surround us. While some students navigate a shrinking job market, others wonder when is the next time they can return home. With so many shifts in both personal lives and larger-scale affairs, it seems that only one word can fully encapsulate what we are feeling: unstable.

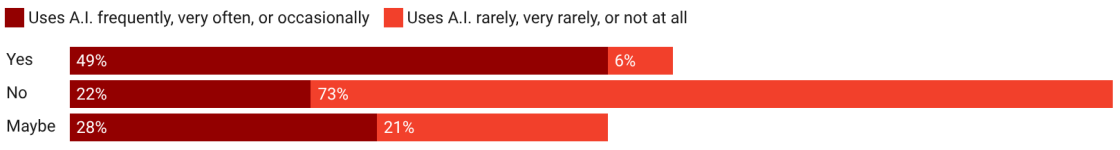
In its eighth year, Zeitgeist seeks to understand how this instability shapes our views of ourselves, others, and the world around us. This year, Zeitgeist 8.0 questions acknowledge that things are constantly fluctuating. To figure out how we move forward, we must first understand the conditions, both within our campus, with its unique perspectives, and outside it.

Many may remember this year through the college's changing landscape. With the inauguration of our 18th President of Middlebury, Ian Baucom; the college being named in the elite colleges lawsuit; vacancies in the English Department; the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in academia; and severe understaffing, it is hard to know whether we are moving forward or backwards.

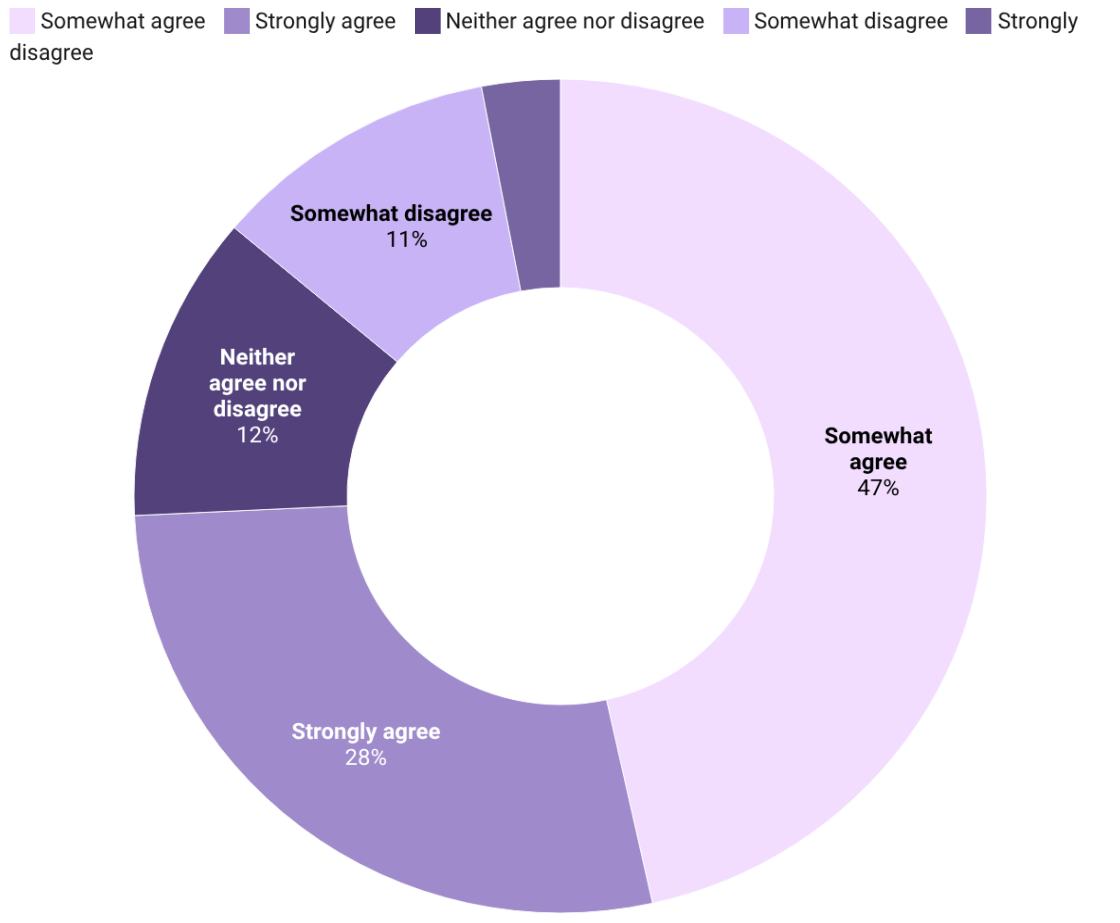
This is also a year marked by extreme tragedy. The loss of another student has left a huge hole in our community. The Trump administration's visa restrictions

Continued on Page 2

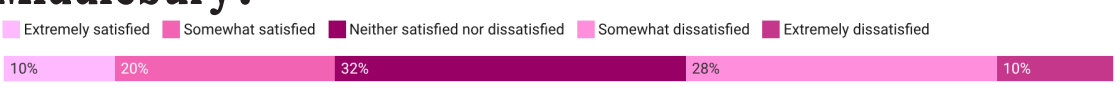
Do you think A.I. helps with your liberal arts learning?



The Trump administration has significantly impacted my life



How satisfied are you with the romantic scene at Middlebury?



Lack of transparency around camera installations stokes student concerns

By MET LY
News Editor

Earlier this year, residents of Weybridge House received a tip that Public Safety was installing cameras at Kitchel House, the current location of the Center for Careers and Internships (CCI), facing towards Weybridge Street, where Weybridge House sits.

"Me and a few housemates were notified during break but it was a lot of speculation," Phoebe An '27, a resident at Weybridge, said. "People were really unsure of the exact details of the nature of what the cameras would look like because there was no type of communication beforehand from other parts of the institution."

"Middlebury has had cameras on its campus for a number of years," Associate Vice President of Safety Demitria Kirby wrote in an email to the campus. "In 2019, an all-campus email to the community explained that Middlebury was investing in additional cameras to enhance security and safety on campus. As funds have been allocated each year since 2019, Middlebury has been installing additional cameras in various locations."

Kirby added that decisions behind what buildings are

Continued on Page 3

WRAP UP

Do students have faith in the future of Middlebury?

By MANDY BERGHELA
Editor-in-Chief

Middlebury has long positioned itself as a liberal arts institution defined by change, but this past academic year marked a particularly consequential period of transition. The college welcomed new leadership, as Ian Baucom assumed presidency in July 2025 and was formally inaugurated in Nov. 2025.

Early in the fall semester, Baucom announced a strategic planning initiative to clarify the college's mission, sharpen its priorities, and define clear goals for the decade ahead. The plan was led by a 13-person steering committee, co-chaired by Professor of Global Health Jessica Holmes and Associate Professor of Chemistry AJ Vasiliou and included many faculty, staff, student, trustee and alumni perspectives.

With all of the talk about change on the campus, there also have been many changes happening outside of the college. Many students and faculty have discussions about the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) both in the classrooms and in the workforce. For many seniors in particular, these questions feel more immediate, with rising concerns about the job market and whether their degree will hold its value in an increasingly uncertain landscape. This year, we also reported on the growing precarity international students face under recent federal immigration policies, adding another layer of unpredictability to many students' college experience.

Amidst the backdrop of instability, both in the liberal arts and beyond, this year's Zeitgeist posed a rather vague final question: Do you have faith in the future of Middlebury? The answers, spanning hundreds of responses, reveal a student body that is largely hopeful — but far from being uncritical.

There was a clear majority of students who answered with a straightforward yes, often with a little bit of hesitation. Some others were more confident answering with "Absolutely!" "Of course" "Without question" which reflects overall optimism in the college. Other students framed their optimism more thoughtfully, pointing a finger to the people who make up the college.

"I have faith that people will keep working to make it better," one student wrote.

"I have faith in students and eager leaders who will drive positive change."

For many, that optimism is directly tied to the new college leadership. Baucom was mentioned a substantial amount of times in the responses, often cited as a renewed source of confidence.

"He is very engaged with the student body," a student wrote.

"He is sane and logical and smart."

"I think the college is headed in the right direction under him."

At the same time, the optimism in Baucom was not absolute. In a moment marked by many uncertainties, students said that leadership alone cannot resolve many of the deeper structural challenges facing the college.

Many students noted concerns about affordability and the changing landscape of higher education in the United States. Rising tuition and limitations in financial aid surfaced quite frequently.

One student wrote: "The cost of attendance risks making Middlebury more full of wealthy elites."

Others pointed out staffing shortages and the treatment of staff on campus.

"I'm disappointed in how the administration has treated staff as a whole, and I think this could have severe ramifications. I think students and faculty are committed to being part of the community, but staff are stretched

Continued on Page 4

POLITICS

What is Middlebury's political climate?

By AJ SLOCUM
Opinions Editor

Political engagement among Middlebury students remains high, with 85% of respondents selecting that they "care a lot about a wide range of issues" or "care a lot about a few specific issues." 12% reported that they "care a little bit," while one percent selected "I don't care at all." Only two percent reported that they "actively avoid thinking/talking about politics."

Marginalized students generally reported higher levels of political engagement. Respondents who identified as people of color were six percentage points more likely to report that they "care a lot about a wide range of issues" than respondents who did not. The largest gap was between LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ individuals: 65% of LGBTQ respondents reported the highest level of political engagement, while 49% of non-LGBTQ respondents did the same.

In accordance with past Zeitgeists, Middlebury's students largely self-identified as liberal. On a scale of zero to 10, with 10 being the most conservative, students most commonly placed themselves at a two. Over 82% of respondents placed themselves at a three or below, while around 10% self-described as conservative (five to 10).

More than half of respondents (62%) described Middlebury's political climate as "somewhat open, but certain opinions dominate," while 26% described it as "somewhat restricted, but different opinions exist." 5% said that the political climate was "very restricted, with few different opinions," and 3% said that it was "very open, with many different opinions."

Separating responses by political ideology reveals that 66% of self-described liberals described the political climate as "somewhat open," while 33% of respondents who identified as conservative did so as well. Conservatives were 12 percentage points more likely to describe Middlebury's political climate as "very restricted" than liberals, and no conservatives described it as "very open," while 3% of liberals did so.

For the second year, we asked if the current Trump administration had significantly impacted students' lives. 75% of respondents agreed with this statement, including 28% who strongly agreed and 47% who somewhat agreed.

International students were more than twice as likely as domestic students to strongly

Continued on Page 4

LOCAL

A State of the State: Addison County and Vermont's political climate
By PHOEBE ADLER, LUCAS BASHAM, ELISABETH DELITT, EDITH HUFFARD and ISAAC SIMONDS

▸ PAGE 5

OPINIONS

Do you have faith in the future of Middlebury?
By THE EDITORIAL BOARD

So you want to go into private equity?
By ELLA BEEBE

▸ PAGE 6

OPINIONS

What's better than watching people suffer?
By ZACH MARCUS

Why you should make art!
By OLIVE AUSTIN

▸ PAGE 6

ARTS & CULTURE

Nocturne: A testament to Middlebury students' unmatched talent and creativity
By MAYA ALEXANDER

"Noah Kahan: Out of Body"
By PHOEBE ADLER

▸ PAGE 8

SPORTS

Softball splits series with Amherst as playoffs approach
By THEO MANIATIS

Joyriding: Middlebury College cycling
By SIMON SCHMIEDER

▸ PAGE 11

INTRODUCTION

Continued from Page 1

are continuing to create severe concerns for international students, budget cuts are causing uncertain futures and U.S. intervention in Iran is relocating some students who are abroad.

Yet, surrounded by turmoil, the Middlebury community continues to lean on one another, finding outlets that express the fear and doubt of our current moment. Whether that's through cultural celebrations, increasing access to the arts or creating opportunities to connect with others, it is clear that Middlebury is at its best when it strives for empathy.

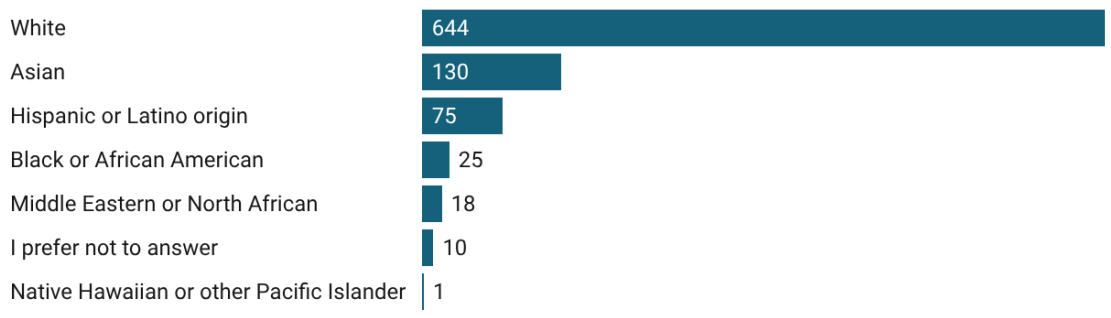
Last year's theme, (un)certainty, explored how we reconcile with being on the cusp of a transitional period. A year later, we are well underway and hope that this year's Zeitgeist will delve into what happens when the changes have been put into place. For the first time ever, we asked: "Do you have faith in the future of Middlebury?" Faithful or faithless, let's see what it means to be a Middlebury student amidst so much instability.

Editor's note: The print version of the Zeitgeist features fewer graphics due to space constraints. The online version features all graphics.

DEMOGRAPHICS

By YUVRAJ SHAH
Managing Editor

Which of the following best describes you?


White 644
Asian 130
Hispanic or Latino origin 75
Black or African American 25
Middle Eastern or North African 18
I prefer not to answer 10
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander 1

Zeitgeist 8.0 received 791 responses this year, representing a 30% response rate among the current full-time degree-seeking student population of 2,618. This marks a 10% decrease in the Zeitgeist response rate as compared to our 2025 survey. The response rate for Zeitgeist 8.0 marks a five-year low in The Campus' annual student survey. Respondents answered 60 questions across eight different sections, ranging from demographic information to Social Life and Sex & Wellness. All respondents were required to answer 15 demographic questions at the start of the survey, with the option to decline to disclose information.

Our questions allow for multiple answers to be selected, often leading to responses which do not align with the college's reported demographic information. As with any Zeitgeist issue, there is over- and underrepresentation of certain groups. Zeitgeist data is anonymous and cannot be shared in any capacity.

The largest class year in Zeitgeist 8.0 was the class of 2026, which represented 23% of responses. The class of 2029 came in second, representing 22% of respondents. The number of first-year respondents was notably high, despite the low overall response rate, likely due to the planned increase in the size of the new class, as the college hopes to generate revenue to close its chronic deficit.

When asked about their race and ethnicity, 644 people identified as white, accounting for 84% of respondents. 16% identified as Asian; nine percent as Hispanic or Latino; three percent as Black or African American; and two percent as Middle Eastern or North African. One respondent identified as Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander.

According to Middlebury's Common Data Set, 56.1% of matriculated students selected to be reported as white, with 30.7% identifying as part of an underrepresented minority, a five-year low. The remaining 13.2% of students are grouped as international. For Zeitgeist 8.0, survey results mirror the worsening diversity of Middlebury's student body, with a five-year low in Black or African American respondents.

The survey asked respondents if they identify as a student of color to create a standard comparison metric for the survey. Under one-quarter of respondents identified as a student of color, in line with previous surveys.

32% of respondents who identified as a person of color said they received financial aid, 14 percentage points higher than for students who identified as not a person of color. Significantly fewer respondents in both categories received financial aid than in previous surveys, despite the reported increases in tuition.

57% of respondents do not receive any financial aid in order to attend Middlebury. 328 respondents, or 41%, do receive financial aid. This marks a 6% decline from the previous survey. Middlebury College reports that 45% of the class of 2029 receives financial aid.

Cisgender females comprised 55% of all respondents, followed by 303 cisgender men — comprising 38% — of respondents. 4% of respondents identified as non-binary, and less than two percent as a transgender male. Another 2 percent of respondents selected "these options don't define me."

Respondents also had the opportunity to select if they identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning (LGBTQ+), with 35% of students identifying as so. This is similar in proportion to the last three student surveys.

18% of respondents reported identifying as a student with a disability while at Middlebury, a 2-percentage-point increase from Zeitgeist 7.0.

Notably, students who identify as LGBTQ+ were more likely to also identify as a student with a disability, making up 23% of students who have had a disability at Middlebury. However, this was a notable decrease from last year's survey, where 57% of students with a disability identified as LGBTQ+. Of the students who did not identify as having a disability, 90% were not LGBTQ+.

This year's Zeitgeist continued last year's introduction of a religious identity question. 54% of respondents did not identify as religious, with 31% as agnostic, and 23% as atheist. Both the atheist and agnostic categories saw an increase compared to last year. 7% of respondents selected the "spiritual" option. Among the named religions, 12% identified as Roman Catholic, 8% as Jewish, 6% as Protestant, 2% as Muslim and 1% as Buddhist.

For the second year in a row, The Campus mistakenly omitted the "Hindu" category from the list of religious identities. A large proportion of the 37 "other" respondents would have likely selected that category.

New England was again the best-represented region among U.S. respondents, with 27% from the region. 14% of respondents were from the far west, 8% from the southeast, 5% from the Great Lakes, and 3.6% each from the Rocky Mountain, Plains, and Southwest regions.

Among respondents not based in the U.S., 6% said they were international students, down from last year's 11%. China was again the most represented, with 18 students. 30 other countries were represented, each containing between 1 and 5 respondents.

Just under half of respondents went to a public high school, while 34% attended a private day school. 11% attended boarding schools, and under 5% attended charter or magnet schools.

Roughly equal proportions of respondents who identified as a person of color or not went to public schools. 37% of respondents who do not identify as a person of color went to private schools, compared to 27% for those who identified as a person of color.

12% of respondents, 97 people, identified as a first-generation college student — neither parent had previously studied at a college — a decrease from last year's 15%, but two percent higher than a 10% low in 2022.

31% of respondents who identify as a person of color are first-generation college students, compared to 7% of students who do not identify as a person of color. 96% of first-generation students received financial aid, compared with 34% of non-first-generation respondents. 28 respondents had both parents attend Middlebury, and 57 had one parent attend. 89% of respondents did not identify as a legacy student.

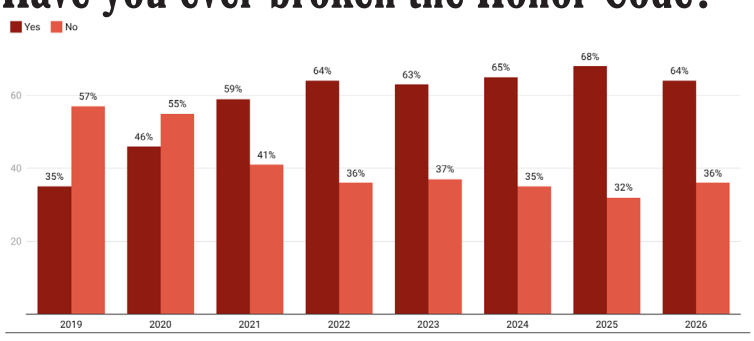
14% of respondents marked that they participate in a varsity sport, identical to the proportion of varsity athletes in last year's survey. It is likely that athletes are underrepresented in this survey as over a quarter of the student body participates in a varsity sport.

24% of varsity athletes reported receiving financial aid, compared to 44% of non-athlete respondents.

ACADEMICS

By KAI ARROWOOD
News Editor

Have you ever broken the Honor Code?



Middlebury students' relationship with academics has largely remained consistent with last year, with a diverse array of majors and high academic fulfillment. Yet A.I. use and Honor Code violations have seen a massive spike over the past three years, and a major split in student opinion on A.I.'s usefulness and Middlebury's policies surrounding it has developed.

The largest portion of Zeitgeist respondents identified as undeclared. Economics and Environmental Studies remain the most popular majors among Middlebury students, which helps explain the Economics Department's recent struggles with rising class sizes and grade inflation.

The number of double majors has continued to increase, jumping from last year's 32.6% to 37.9%. The increase could be attributed to the lower number of Zeitgeist respondents this year, but it marks a shift towards interdisciplinary study among Middlebury students.

Although reported Honor Code violations decreased by 4% this year, the majority of respondents admitted to having broken the Honor Code, most of them citing unauthorized use of A.I. as at least one of the ways they had broken it. Calls for revisions to the Honor Code, given the rising A.I. use, have broken out, and A.I. policies tend to vary widely from department to department and professor to professor.

Unauthorized A.I. use has spiked over the past year, climbing from 46% to 74%; this number has steadily increased since the Zeitgeist first asked about it in 2023, but this year presents the most extreme jump yet, reflecting the increased presence of A.I. use by Middlebury students. Reports of the use of unauthorized aid and cheating have also increased from last year, by 16% and 10%, respectively.

The sudden increase in Honor Code violations signals a rising disregard for the Honor Code as it stands. A third of respondents did not report feeling guilty about breaking the Honor Code, while the largest portion of respondents reported feeling guilt, an almost identical distribution to last year's Zeitgeist.

Close to a third of students use A.I. for their classes either very often or frequently, unauthorized or not. Given the ever-increasing number of A.I. models, A.I. use has become much more accessible over the past three years. This year's Clifford Symposium was dedicated to discussing A.I.'s rising prevalence in the classroom and beyond, and both faculty and experts put forth a wide range of opinions on its future at Middlebury. A concrete, detailed A.I. policy beyond what is currently written in the Honor Code and on Middlebury's website has yet to be introduced.

The student body is split on Middlebury's approach to A.I., with 31% of respondents at least somewhat satisfied with the college's policies and 33% at least somewhat dissatisfied. The largest portion of respondents reported neutral feelings towards Middlebury's A.I. approach. Students who reported breaking the Honor Code due to unauthorized use of A.I. were no more likely to find an issue with Middlebury's A.I. approach than those who did not report unauthorized use of A.I.

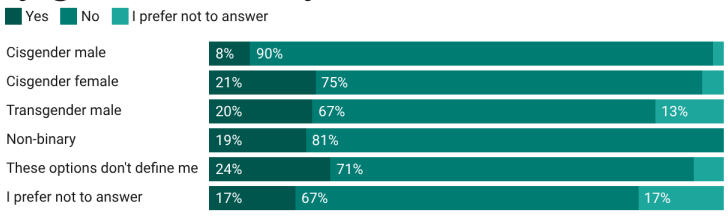
The debate over whether A.I. impedes learning has surged with A.I. use. Unsurprisingly, the vast majority of students who reported using A.I. rarely, very rarely, or not at all said that A.I. does not help with their liberal arts learning, while close to half of students who report using A.I. frequently, very often or occasionally said that it did. Schoolwide, the student body is split, with 43% of respondents saying that A.I. harms their liberal arts learning.

When sorted by major, Economics majors were the most likely to think that A.I. helps with their liberal arts learning, while Environmental Studies majors were the least likely to believe that it helped. Among undeclared students, there is a more even split: 44 respondents believe A.I. helps their learning, 43 say it doesn't and 24 say it "maybe helps" their learning.

Despite the recent increases in reported Honor Code violations, the majority of students feel academically fulfilled at Middlebury. Reported A.I. use did not substantially impact respondents' feelings of academic fulfillment, although first-generation students were 10% less likely to feel academically fulfilled.

SAFETY & WELLNESS

Have you experienced sexual assault? By gender identity


Yes
No
I prefer not to answer
Cisgender male 8% 90%
Cisgender female 21% 75%
Transgender male 20% 67% 13%
Non-binary 19% 81%
These options don't define me 24% 71%
I prefer not to answer 17% 67% 17%

By VIOLET WEXLER
Local Editor

This past academic year, the Middlebury community has grappled with a shifting landscape, navigating global and political crises, campus discourse, and mental health concerns. Both national events and everyday experiences affect the student body and the community's well-being. Understanding how students think about safety and wellness on campus remains not only relevant but necessary.

This year, 83% of respondents reported feeling happy, compared with 87% the previous year.

Cisgender females reported the highest levels of happiness, with 88% of respondents answering yes, whereas transgender males reported the lowest, with 67% answering yes. To preserve respondents' anonymity, the identity "Transgender female" was excluded because it represented fewer than 5 respondents. This is consistent with Campus editorial policy.

While 64% of respondents reported that they have struggled in their relationship with food or exercise, the category varies dramatically when broken down by gender identity. 77% of cisgender female students answered yes, compared to 45% of cisgender male students. Nonbinary students reported the highest percentage, with 84% of students answering yes.

57% of students reported feeling comfortable using the athletic center facilities, with 34% answering "in some places or at some times," and 9% answering no. These numbers mirror last year's almost exactly.

Almost half of respondents (47%) reported that they never find themselves using alcohol or drugs to cope with stress, with 28% answering "rarely," 20% answering "occasionally," and only 4.6% respondents answering "frequently." The first-year Febs (2029.5) reported the lowest numbers, with 69% answering "never" and 0% answering "frequently."

An overwhelming number of participants (90%) reported feeling safe walking around campus, with 9% reporting "in some places or at some times" and only 0.4% (three respondents) answering "no."

73% of respondents reported that they have never experienced self-harm or suicidal ideation while at Middlebury. The numbers have remained consistent since the question was first asked in Zeitgeist 6.0.

15% of respondents reported that they have experienced sexual assault, although only 44% of the incidents happened on Middlebury's campus or on a Middlebury program. On campus, 23% of respondents report having a sexual experience that made them uncomfortable, which is down 8% from last year.

8% of cisgender males report that they have experienced sexual assault, compared with 21% of cisgender females. 20% of respondents who identify as transgender male or non-binary students reported that they have experienced sexual assault. When examining sexual orientation, 22% of LGBTQ students report that they have experienced sexual assault, compared to 12% of non-LGBTQ students.

Notably, only 15% of those who have experienced sexual assault reported the incident to Middlebury, and only 25% of students were satisfied with the way the school addressed their complaints (although this number comes from a much smaller sample size than the rest of the Zeitgeist).

42% of respondents reported avoiding people on campus due to their own sexual experiences or experiences of their friends.

SOCIAL LIFE

By CURRAN AMSTER
Senior Opinions Editor

Middlebury students are typically well-rounded beyond academics; they are artists, outdoor people and early-career professionals. But we often overlook our social well-being in pursuit of being accomplished students. This year, we asked students to reflect on different aspects of their social life at Middlebury. Composed of first-generation students, varsity athletes and international students, the Middlebury community does not socialize in the same way.

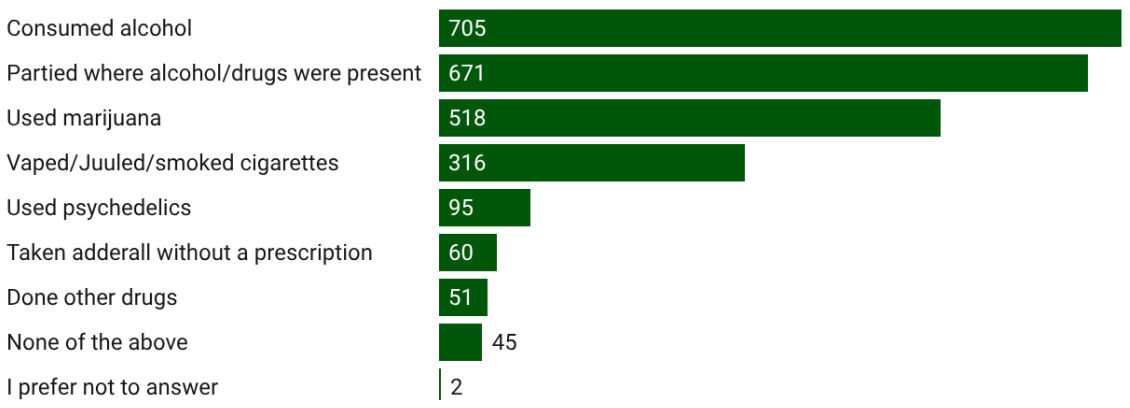
For Middlebury students, finding time to spend with friends can be a challenge. When asked what impeded them from spending time with friends, respondents, sorted by 91% of first-generation and 94% non-first-generation students, answered that the major impediment was academic work. A close second for first-generation respondents was the financial cost of outings, at 53%, compared to 17% of respondents who do not identify as first-generation students. 53% of non-first-generation students said extracurricular commitments were the second-largest barrier to spending time with friends. 36% of first-generation students cited the lack of a car on campus as a barrier to spending time with friends, compared to 20% of non-first-generation respondents.

A majority of respondents said they felt fulfilled by their friendships at Middlebury, with 611 responses saying yes. Unsurprisingly, when broken down by grade, the class of 2029.5 showed the highest level of uncertainty about their friendships, as they have had the least time to form those bonds yet.

When asked if they felt isolated at Middlebury, 86% of students identifying as a person of color responded yes. For respondents who do not identify as a person of color, 74% said no. The drastic difference between levels of isolation and identification points to Middlebury's geographical location and to the experience of living in a majority-white area. Secondly, the Trump administration's crackdown on the language of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) led to a restructuring in the Middlebury Office of DEI.

The party scene at Middlebury remains consistently oriented towards alcohol, with 705 respondents having consumed

At Middlebury, I have:



alcohol. For the class of 2026, 80% of respondents have used marijuana, and 17% have tried psychedelics. For the class of 2029, 54% report using marijuana, and only 7% report using psychedelics. The average use of marijuana and psychedelics is higher for Feb graduates, which remains consistent with last year's results.

This year, respondents noted that dining halls and dorms were the most important parts of their social life at Middlebury, a result consistent with last year's findings. Club sports and varsity sports ranked the lowest, with 14% of respondents finding varsity sports important to their social life. This is likely due to the historic low response rate among varsity athletes in the Zeitgeist.

A majority of those who responded that they were less "proud to be a panther" were not varsity athletes. However, Middlebury students generally seem to fall into the category of prideful, with 179 respondents rating themselves 8 out of 10 on a scale from "not proud" to "proud".

Of respondents receiving need-based financial aid, 77% reported working a paid job. Of those not receiving need-based financial aid, 56% reported working a paid job. The 21% gap between students who receive financial aid reflects the financial disparities present at Middlebury, which often require students to fill the gaps with paid jobs.

Overall, students' satisfaction with their social lives seems consistent with the amount of time they have spent in our community developing friendships and relationships over the years. However, respondents also showed that social life at Middlebury can be costly, and that academic work and the cost of outings –– which often require time and money that could otherwise be spent working –– place a burden on students who must balance their needs with their desire for social activities.

SEX & LOVE

By MAYA ALEXANDER
Editor-at-Large

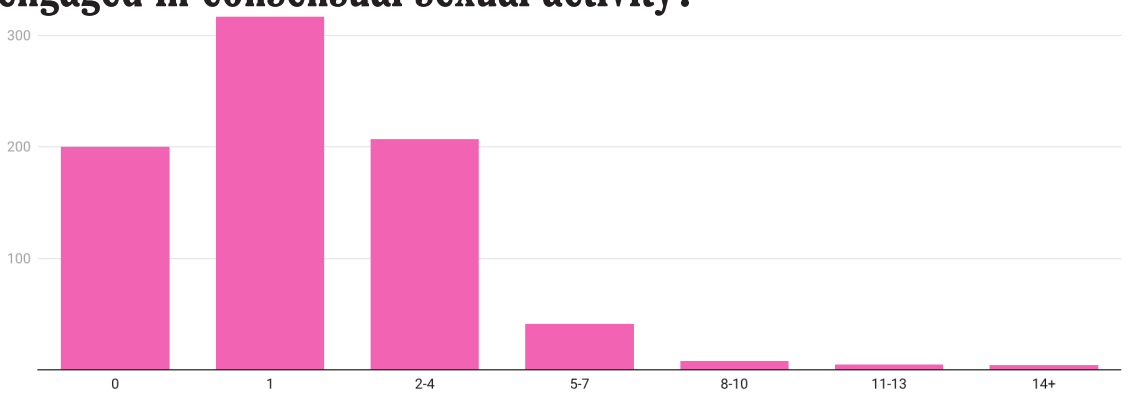
When thinking about instability, love may be one of the first things that comes to mind for Middlebury students. While many would ideally have a committed romantic relationship, the reality often looks different, with shifting and sometimes confusing relationships.

For the second year, we asked if students were in a romantic or sexual relationship to better unpack what this romantic instability may look like.

44% of all 791 respondents said that they are currently in a romantic or sexual relationship, while 56% said they are not.

Senior Febs (class of 2026.5) appear to be the most romantic, followed by graduating seniors at 60% and 54%, respectively. The class of 2026 had a lower rate of romantic and sexual relationships than last year's seniors, with a 5-percentage-point drop. However, the rate of romantic relationships in the class of 2026 increased by two percentage points from last year.

In the last 12 months, with how many partners have you engaged in consensual sexual activity?



Baby Febs (class of 2029.5) had the lowest rate of romantic or sexual relationships at 28%, consistent with last year's results.

Middlebury students are nearly just as satisfied with the college's romantic scene as they were last year. This year, 10% of students reported being extremely satisfied. 20% were somewhat satisfied, and 32% said they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, the same percentages as last year. 28% of students reported feeling somewhat dissatisfied, and 10% reported being extremely dissatisfied, consistent with last year's 28% and 10%, respectively.

Among respondents who identify as LGBTQ+, the percentages remained nearly the same across all categories, fluctuating by only one or two percentage points.

The gap between past romantic experiences and ideal relationships endures this year. 77% of respondents reported that they would ideally have a committed, monogamous relationship, a 2-percentage-point decrease from last year. However, only 52% of students reported having had a committed relationship, similarly to last year's 53%. In addition, 44% of students are currently in a committed relationship.

Just over half (51%) have reported having a situationship, yet only 15% indicated they would ideally have one. In a similar fashion, a mere 9% reported ideally having a long-distance relationship, while 35% indicated that they have been in one.

Mutual friends remain the place where students most commonly find romantic or sexual partners (47%), followed by parties and gatherings (44%). Nearly a quarter of students (24%) continue to find partners through their classes. Other responses included Middlebury Language Schools and dorms.

74% of respondents reported having at least one romantic or sexual partner in the past year, a slight decrease from last year's 77%. Consistent with past years, one partner accounted for the highest percentage of responses, at 41%.

14% of respondents said they would describe their sexuality differently than how they did when they arrived at Middlebury, a four percentage point drop from last year, and a drop of over 10 percentage points since 2022, when 26% of respondents said they would describe their sexuality differently.

Each year, the percentage of LGBTQ+ students who describe their sexuality differently has also dropped steadily. This year, 25% of respondents responded "yes," a significant decrease from last year's 34%. However, 14% of respondents identifying as not LGBTQ+ said they would describe their sexuality differently, a five-percentage-point increase from last year.

Lack of transparency around camera installations stokes student concerns

Continued from Page 1

chosen each year depend on "the availability of capital funding, the renovation plans of our campus partners, and historical building considerations."

Middlebury College currently has approximately 100 cameras throughout its 150+ properties on or near the main campus. According to Campus reporting in 2020, camera installations at McCullough Student Center and BiCentennial Hall sparked student concerns around impacts on BIPOC students and institutional trust.

"When this decision was made pre-Covid, it was a very different political climate [compared to] what we're seeing right now." Remi Beauharnois '27, a fellow resident, said in an interview with the Campus. "There's a lot of concern about who has access to this footage and if they're legally required to by federal agencies such as ICE."

On the issue of who has access to footage, Kirby said access is tightly controlled.

"The only individuals within Public Safety who have authority to pull camera footage are myself, my associate director, assistant director, and lieutenant. Approval is only given for significant policy violations, life safety concerns, criminal investigations, or legal requests. That footage is then stored in a secure folder that only the four of us have access to," Kirby said.

Any subpoenas and court orders are directed to the Office of the General Counsel, as per Middlebury's Cameras on Campus policy.

The policy also notes that "[Cameras] are not monitored continuously under normal operating conditions but may be monitored for legitimate safety and security purposes."

"Higher security has always threatened the privacy of students of color and marginalized students," An said. "I come from Texas, so I also understand what it's like to experience these types of situations, so it's not like I'm coming from a naïve point of view, but I am also aware that the ability to securitize our campus is at the expense of certain students."

Research on students of color at predominantly white institutions (PWIs) suggests disproportionate effects of physical surveillance infrastructure on students depending on their identity. Even without any cameras being installed, people of color report feelings of isolation, emotional exhaustion, and what researchers called "racial battle fatigue" due hypervisibility — a subject-specific term referring to being acutely conscious of heightened racial scrutiny in predominantly white spaces. A report found that surveillance infrastructure adds onto this existing psychological burden exacerbating a "chilling effect" — a legal term for the inhibition of the legitimate exercise of natural and legal rights – among BIPOC students due to existing fraught relationships with institutional authority.

"As a liberal arts institution that relies on academia to be the source of how we understand our principles, our values, and how we shape our communities, there should be a better way of looking into this academic work and speaking our truths," An said.

An and Beauharnois emphasized that their concern rests on the lack of transparency in the camera installation process.

"I am aware that it's not our choice to be able to determine whether security cameras are implemented. It's more about the ability to have transparent conversations and be notified about it," An said.

Both students touched on the atmosphere of fear that arose after learning the information.

"We talked to other smaller houses to ask them if they had also heard or had been notified of anything, and they said 'no', so there was a lot of fear mongering going on," Beauharnois said.

"We were operating under false pretenses that aspects of the cameras were going to exist in a way that they actually aren't so that created a lot of unmitigated fear," An said. "When we talked to PubSafe about it, they were like 'oh but you weren't supposed to find out.'"

There are no provisions in the college's Cameras on Campus policy that specifically require notifying residents when cameras are added near or in residential areas, nor is there any community consultation prior to a generic complaint process that occurs after the fact.

When questioned about whether they were planning to inform community members on Weybridge Street about the camera installations, An said that Public Safety said no, citing that they aren't obliged to inform residents about installations per policy and that it isn't standard for peer institutions to do so.

"We're not trying to aspire to be like our peer institutions, we're striving to do better than that," An said. "That means communicating with our neighbours around us."

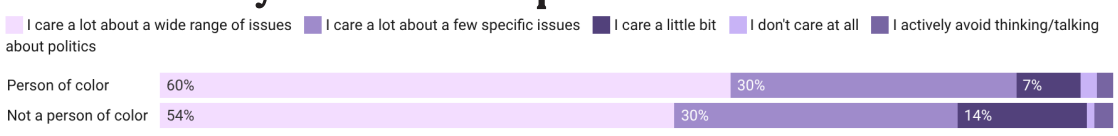
"Having cameras throughout campus is a matter of best practice and common amongst institutions of higher education, among other sectors," Kirby said. "Consistent with the policy, cameras are installed in public parts of campus or facing public areas, not in spaces where there is an expectation of privacy. Depending on the locations, appropriate offices are consulted or involved, including Residential Life for any space that is a student residential facility."

The conversation fits into a broader dialogue on camera installation and surveillance in institutions of higher education. Middlebury College's relative safety and remote location permit it to have fewer security cameras than peer institutions. Recent trends point to expanded camera coverage driven by safety concerns, liability pressures, and institutions viewing cameras as standard practice. Peer institutions such as Vassar College and Swarthmore College reflect this trend, possessing 304 and 363, respectively, with Swarthmore adding five to eight cameras annually. These developments have been met with community response. For example, Colgate University convened a working group in 2024 to address privacy concerns related to security systems with students, faculty, and staff.

"I understand their point of view that it's difficult to maintain the conversation throughout different generations of students, but that doesn't necessarily mean that they [should] stop the communication at all," An said. "If you close the door for the conversation to begin with, then we have nowhere to go."

POLITICS & VALUES

How much do you care about politics?



Continued from Page 1

agree that the current Trump administration significantly impacted their lives. This reflects the current administration's emphasis on anti-immigration policies, which have made it more difficult for international students to study in the U.S.

Students from marginalized groups were more likely to agree that the Trump administration significantly impacted their lives. 100% of transgender male respondents, 84% of nonbinary respondents, and 81% of cisgender female respondents either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed with this statement. 62% of cisgender male respondents also expressed agreement. Since less than 5 respondents identified as transgender female, they were not included to preserve respondent anonymity, as per Campus editorial policy. In accordance with last year's responses to this question, LGBTQ+ individuals and people of color were more likely than their non-LGBTQ+ and non-POC counterparts to agree that the Trump administration has significantly impacted them.

While political concerns were prevalent, climate change was identified by respondents as the most pressing issue of our time for the seventh consecutive year. Almost 80% of climate-related responses cited climate change alone, while the remainder cited it alongside other issues, such as human rights and AI governance. "Democracy," "democratic erosion," and "democratic backsliding" were mentioned over 30 times, and "fascism" was cited over 20 times. Respondents also expressed concerns about authoritarianism, consolidation of power and checks and balances.

Political polarization was a pressing issue, with some linking it to social media and others to a lack of civil discourse. Closely following were economic issues, including income inequality and affordability. Students expressed anxieties about their economic futures, highlighting the "inability to live comfortably as Americans on a modest salary" and "labor market difficulties." Critiques of capitalism and imperialism also appeared about twenty times. Several respondents connected these critiques to American foreign policy and interventionism.

War was cited over forty times, with some responses explicitly naming Iran. Thirty-five responses explicitly named Trump or the "current administration," while over forty identified immigration and/or ICE as the most pressing issues. Palestine, Gaza, and Israel were much less frequently mentioned than in past years, with fewer than 15 responses. Respondents also named human rights, corruption and apathy as key issues.

As in past years, some students focused on personal issues, such as academic work and interpersonal relationships. Overall, the survey responses highlighted students' political engagement and showed how national and international events impact students' daily lives at Middlebury.

WRAP UP

Do students have faith in the future of Middlebury?

Continued from Page 1

too thin."

"I have concerns about what might be cut in the pursuit of the college increasing its income (lower wages and less benefits for faculty and staff, tuition hikes, the College deciding to restrict/diminish/underfund or completely shut down programs)."

Academic concerns were prominent as well, as some students questioned whether the college is keeping up with shifts in education across the country, particularly with the rise of AI.

"I think there needs to be significant reform of honor code and AI policy to encourage learning rather than GPA focused work," one student wrote.

"I believe that white collar jobs will be mostly consumed by AI. Middlebury either needs to incorporate AI in a massive way or teach more practical, blue collar skills."

"I think that developing a uniform approach to AI (at least within departments) will be important for this future. I don't think it matters if we choose to embrace or reject AI."

"Ban AI!!"

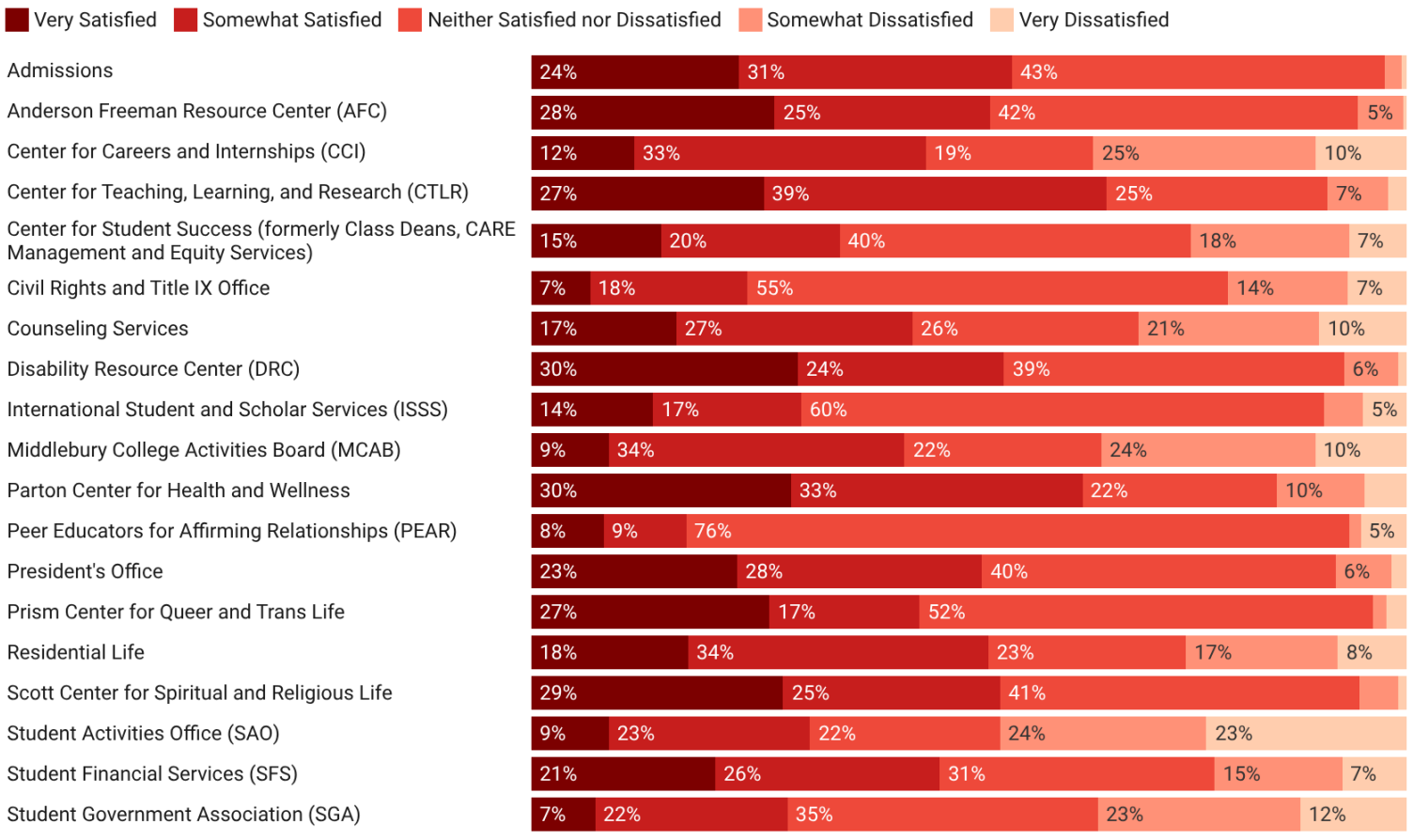
Among all of the more critical responses, there often was a sense of investment in the college. Students who wrote about the doubt in the college paired it with a desire for reform such as better support systems, stronger community and overall more transparency from Old Chapel.

If Zeitgeist is meant to capture the spirit of the student body, this year's responses point to a campus defined less by certainty than by instability: a constant push and pull between optimism and concern, tradition and change. To many students, the future of the college is constantly in flux.

RESOURCES

By GABRIELLA GERIG
Editorial Board Director

How satisfied are you with the following resources available to Middlebury students?


Very Satisfied
Somewhat Satisfied
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied
Somewhat Dissatisfied
Very Dissatisfied
Admissions 24% 31% 43%
Anderson Freeman Resource Center (AFC) 28% 25% 42% 5%
Center for Careers and Internships (CCI) 12% 33% 19% 25% 10%
Center for Teaching, Learning, and Research (CTLR) 27% 39% 25% 7%
Center for Student Success (formerly Class Deans, CARE Management and Equity Services) 15% 20% 40% 18% 7%
Civil Rights and Title IX Office 7% 18% 55% 14% 7%
Counseling Services 17% 27% 26% 21% 10%
Disability Resource Center (DRC) 30% 24% 39% 6%
International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) 14% 17% 60% 5%
Middlebury College Activities Board (MCAB) 9% 34% 22% 24% 10%
Parton Center for Health and Wellness 30% 33% 22% 10%
Peer Educators for Affirming Relationships (PEAR) 8% 9% 76% 5%
President's Office 23% 28% 40% 6%
Prism Center for Queer and Trans Life 27% 17% 52%
Residential Life 18% 34% 23% 17% 8%
Scott Center for Spiritual and Religious Life 29% 25% 41%
Student Activities Office (SAO) 9% 23% 22% 24% 23%
Student Financial Services (SFS) 21% 26% 31% 15% 7%
Student Government Association (SGA) 7% 22% 35% 23% 12%

How satisfied are you with your financial aid package?

This year, we asked students about their awareness and satisfaction with resources on campus, including the Student Activities Office (SAO), Center for Careers and Internships (CCI) and Student Government Association (SGA). We also inquired about students' satisfaction with their financial aid packages.

The resources that received the highest ratings of student approval were the Disability Resource Center (DRC) and the Parton Center for Health and Wellness, with 30% of respondents very satisfied with both. The Scott Center for Spiritual and Religious Life was next, with 29% of respondents very satisfied. Although the DRC received one of the highest overall ratings, it declined by 13 percentage points this year. The Civil Rights and Title IX Office and the SGA received the lowest approval rate, with only 7% of respondents very satisfied.

The resource with the highest dissatisfaction rate is the SAO, with 23% of respondents very dissatisfied. The SGA had the second-highest dissatisfaction rate, with 12% of respondents very dissatisfied. The CCI, Counseling Services and the Middlebury College Activities Board (MCAB) are all tied for third, with 10% of respondents feeling very dissatisfied. MCAB had a one-per-cent increase in those who responded "very-satisfied," consistent with its low overall rating since the reported purchase of Aritzia superpuff jackets in 2024. The SGA disapproval rating increased by six percentage points, but otherwise the results are consistent with last year's data.

Students' familiarity with resources remained consistent with the past two years. Aside from Residential Life, MCAB and the CCI were the most widely known resources, with 86% and 83% of students indicating some level of satisfaction, respectively. In line with historical trends, these resources received worse approval ratings. Only 9% were very satisfied with MCAB, and just 12% with the CCI.

Resources used by the fewest students included the International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) — 70% respondents reported not having used it — and Peer Educators for Affirming Relationships (PEAR).

Ten percent of respondents reported not knowing what the Anderson Freeman Resource Center (AFC), Center for Student Success and PEAR are. Middlebury only launched the Center for Student Success this February, a hub designed to streamline access to student resources and support. This consolidated the Class Deans, CARE management and Equity Services into a single team. This is also the first academic year with PEAR, which combined the resources of the now-closed MiddSafe and the Mental Health Peer Educators. This new system is one possible explanation for the decreased visibility of these resources.

Overall, the percentage of students very satisfied with the CCI dropped by three percentage points from the previous year. Students in the class of 2026 were more disappointed with the CCI than their 2029 counterparts, reflecting a general decrease in satisfaction over the years. Only 34% of respondents in the class of 2026 reported some level of satisfaction with the CCI, compared with 53% in the class of 2029.

Although this could be attributed to a general increase in exposure to the CCI over four years, it could also reflect the effects of a tight job market and competitive job search.

Among international students who took the survey, 76% said they were very or somewhat satisfied with the ISSS, up five percentage points from last year. The efficacy and accessibility of the ISSS are especially important as international students are constantly maneuvering uncertainty and strife with new immigration policies under the current Trump administration.

Student satisfaction with their financial aid packages increased by two percentage points from last year, with 27% of respondents reporting high satisfaction. The 2025 Zeitgeist also noted a two percentage point increase from the 2024 Zeitgeist, indicating a constant increase over the past two years.

Only 25% of students familiar with Student Financial Services reported being very satisfied with their financial aid packages; however, this is a slightly more positive rating than the 22% reported last year.

Only 3.1% of first-generation students said they did not receive financial aid packages, compared with 54% of non-first-generation students. However, first-generation students report much higher satisfaction, with 78% feeling very or somewhat satisfied, compared with 25% of non-first-generation students. This is consistent with last year's data.

Buddhist and Jewish students indicated that they were most likely to use the Scott Center for Spiritual and Religious Life, with 67% of respondents indicating their level of satisfaction. Only 50% of Buddhist respondents reported being very or somewhat satisfied with the resource. It is important to note that this could be impacted by a limited sample size, with only 12 students identifying as Buddhist in the survey. 78% of Jewish students felt very or somewhat satisfied with the Scott Center. Similar to last year, 71% of agnostic and 73% of atheist respondents said they had not used the Scott Center.

METHODOLOGY

By MANDY BERGHELA
Editor-in-Chief

Zeitgeist came out today on April 30, however this has been a nine week endeavor which started on March 1.

The Zeitgeist team consists of a group of Campus editors across different sections. We met in early March to review questions from past Zeitgeist additions, particularly Zeitgeist 7.0, and evaluated whether or not it would be relevant for this year. We also got feedback from a form posted on our Instagram page, and the finalized survey comprised 60 questions in total.

The team also brainstormed some new questions to add to this year's edition. Some notable ones include: Do you think A.I. helps with your liberal arts learning? Do you feel academically fulfilled at Middlebury? Do you feel fulfilled by the friendships you've made at Middlebury? We also added the open ended question: Do you have faith in the future of Middlebury?

We launched the survey on the morning of Monday, March 30, and ran it for two weeks through Monday, April 13 at midnight. We advertised Zeitgeist 8.0 through three emails to the entire student body, several Instagram posts and stories, and by tabling four times outside the Proctor and Ross dining halls. In the end, we received 790 responses by the time we closed the survey on Qualtrics.

Each of our writers for Zeitgeist then used the anonymous Zeitgeist responses and created data visualizations through Data Wrapper, a platform that is used extensively in data journalism. We then published the results in print and online on Thursday, April 30, 2026.

The theme we chose for this year's Zeitgeist is "Unstable". This can be interpreted in many different ways — academically, socially, politically — but what it ultimately reflects is a moment of transition. Based on many of the responses to our wrap-up question, "Do you have faith in the future of Middlebury?", this is a campus that is thinking in real time, grappling with what it means to move forward in this moment. Zeitgeist is not meant to offer the ultimate answer to all of this, but rather capture a snapshot of the complexity of the Middlebury experience in 2026.

If anything, this can remind us that instability is not only something to fear, but something that can provoke reflection, conversation and change.

ZEITGEIST ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

By MANDY BERGHELA
Editor-in-Chief

The Campus has spent the past nine weeks producing Zeitgeist, with a dedicated team of editors contributing over one hundred hours of writing, editing and visualization to bring today's final product to life. Without all of these efforts, none of this would have been made possible.

Thank you to the Zeitgeist team, who helped brainstorm new questions, write sections, create incredible visuals and tabled for this years' edition. This team (in no particular order) includes: Yuvraj Shah '26, Curran Amster '26, Maya Alexander '26, Gabi Gerig '27, Violet Wexler '28, AJ Slocum '26.5, Kai Arrowood '29 and myself. However, this team would not have been made possible without the amazing Ellie Trinkle '26, whose leadership kept all of us on track for this year's Zeitgeist. Ellie created the entire Zeitgeist master plan, ensuring we stayed on track each week and took notes for all the Zeitgeist meetings we held. Ellie also trained the Zeitgeist team on Qualtrics and Datawrapper to create all the visuals, which she has extensive experience with from years past. Thank you, Ellie!

A special shoutout as well to the incredibly talented layout team, led by Joanne Zhang '29. Somehow, they managed to fit both our regular stories and Zeitgeist into just 12 pages.

Thank you also to the fantastic online team, led by Kayleigh Christley '28, whose work made this project accessible to a much wider audience.

An overall huge thank you to the entire Campus staff for spreading the word to students and for editing each week. I do not think our editors are thanked enough for their work, so kudos to all of them!

And finally, thank you to all of the students who participated in this year's Zeitgeist. Whether you've filled it out every year or encountered it for the first time, your responses are what make this project possible. By sharing your experiences, you've helped create a snapshot of life at Middlebury in this particular moment.

I hope the questions we posed — and the answers you offered — spark reflection on your time at Middlebury, inspire conversations with friends and classmates, and maybe even challenge your understanding of this college. However you may have approached it, your contribution is now part of Middlebury's story.

Thank you for trusting the Campus with this work each spring. I hope you'll continue to share your voices with us at Zeitgeist 9.0 next year. It's been especially meaningful to watch this project evolve since I first took it as a freshman during Zeitgeist 5.0 and even more so now to help shape what it has become.

A State of the State: Addison County and Vermont's political environment

By PHOEBE ADLER, LUCAS BASHAM, ELISABETH DELLIT, EDITH HUFFARD, & ISAAC SIMONDS
Staff & Contributing Writers

On August 11, 2026, voters will stream to the polls to vote in Vermont's primary elections. Many Middlebury College students who live out of state might assume that Vermont's political demographic is a blazing blue, the state of Bernie Sanders. Though the state's well known Senator, Bernie Sanders, is associated with democratic socialism, the However, the real demographics of Vermont, and in particular Addison County, are a complicated mix of political ideologies.far more complicated.

Up until 1963, Vermont had never had a Democratic governor, and it was only in thetook until the late 20th century thatfor Democrats secured to gain a majority in the state's legislature. Since then1963, Vermont's Governorship has alternated from Republican to Democratic.

At the federal level, the state votes overwhelmingly liberal, but at the state level, Today, Vermont is a paradox in American politics. It overwhelmingly votes liberal at the federal level, but at the state level, it is much more purple.

On a fFederal levelly, Vermont is one of the most Ddemocratic states in the country, voting comfortably for the Ddemocratic presidential candidate in every election since 1992, and sending progressive firebrands such as Bernie Sandersto the Senate, such as Bernie Sanders, b. BBut resultsut results stateside at the state level are vastly different.

Vermont is one of the few places in the country where extreme polarization and nationalization of politics have not hit as hard. Current Governor Phil Scott, though a Rrepublican, does not support the typical MAGA policiesideologiespoliciesis not a typical MAGA Republican. He is pro-choice, supportive of LGBTQ+ rights, and openly voted for Joe Biden in 2020 and Kamala Harris in 2024. Scott's But this also reflects that Vermont is one of the few places in the country where extreme polarization and nationalization of politics have not hit as hard. According to an article by NOTUS, Vermonters vote for the person, not the party, and with democrats still holding legislative majorities, many voters see a moderate Republican governor as a useful check.

In 2024, Kamala Harris earned 64% of the vote in Vermont, and Bernie Sanders earned 63%, both very strong margins for Democrats. Yet, that same year, Republican Governor Phil Scott received an extraordinary 73% of the vote, Republican John Rodgers narrowly beat incumbent Democratic/ Progressive Lieutenant Governor David Zuckerman, and Democrats received only 52% of the vote in the State Senate, which caused them to lose six seats – including one in Addison County. As a result, Vermont Democrats lost their supermajorities in both the House and the Senate in a drastic shift that ousted many incumbent Democrats.

"The chief explanation for the 2024 Republican wins in the legislature was the [19%] increase in property taxes that year," explained Bert Johnson, a political science professor at Middlebury since 2004. "The bad fiscal news resonated with Republican Governor Phil Scott's continued focus on affordability in the state and encouraged more Republican candidates to enter key races."

Addison County, Middlebury's district, is a prime example of the tug-of-war between Republicans and Democrats. It's the only "purple" county in the state, with one Democratic state senator and one RepublicanDemocratic state senator. . Steve Heffernan (R) was elected in 2024, riding the red wave across the state. He campaigned with the promise to "balance Montpelier," and is a staunch advocate for lower property taxes. In 2026, Heffernan has been mobilizing the public backlash to Addison County's 16% increase in property taxes (on average). Ruth Hardy (D) has been Addison County's state senator since 2018 and has worked primarily on education reform and expanding child tax credits. Hardy also supports Vermont Democratic Party legislation on green energy and land usage (Act 150). Both Heffernan and Hardy are running for reelection in 2026.

"Affordability is the top concern—plain and simple. We are losing both young people and older residents because they can no longer afford to live here. This issue ties into so many areas, including healthcare, education, and transportation," Heffernan said.

While both Hardy and Heffernan expressed concern over affordability, making a living, and housing costs, Hardy also described how constituents are worried about the state of democracy and human rights on a federal and state level.

"There are a lot of people who are very worried about the future virge democracy, the human rights of people in our country, and the impact of our economy and our relationships with other countries,." Hardy said.

For Heffernan, the Vermont Republican Party at large needs to continue making Vermont more affordable, while also striking a balance fiscally.

"Ideologically, I think we need balance—continuing to move forward with energy-saving and environmental initiatives, but in a way that doesn't create excessive costs. We can protect our environment without making it so difficult or expensive to build homes or start new businesses," Heffernan explained.

Hardy hopes that Vermont Democrats can capitalize on the current administration's low polling. "I think Democrats need to be able to be clear about what their messages are and be clear about what our accomplishments have been, and not let this opportunity go by. We need to be ready to campaign hard and ready to tell our story and to also tell the story of how Republicans are the party of Trump and that they are responsible for the [Iranian] war," Hardy commented.

The upcoming midterms provideWhen consideringIn considering the upcoming midterms, this is a legitimate an opportunity for Vermont Democrats to countercombat the rightward swing seen in 2024 by addressing the issues that mattermattering most to Vermonters. At a time when significant changes are occurring within the Democratic party, both at the federal and state levels, and voters' views on what kind of Democrat they want to be represented by are shifting, primaries are a key opportunity for voters to make their voices heard. In the case of the Lieutenant Governor's race, while such a role certainly does not have as many tasks as the Governor's', they do have it does offer the opportunity to advocate for specific issues they feel strongly about.

Whoever winsis victorious in the upcoming primary will indicate what Vermont Ddemocratic voters are actively concerned about and what needs to change within the state. These primaries, notably the more competitive ones such as the Lieutenant Governor's race, are important so matter so that when Vermonters head to the polls once again in November, they can confidently place their vote for a candidate who they know will represent them accurately and with the necessary focus for specific issues.

At a time when significant changes are occurring surrounding the priorities of candidates, both at the federal and state levels, and voters' views on what kind of candidate they would like to be represented by are shifting, primaries, both Democratic and Republican, are a key opportunity for voters to make their voices heard. In the case of the Lieutenant Governor's race for example, while such a role certainly does not have as many tasks as the Governor's, it does offer the opportunity to advocate for specific issues they feel strongly about. Professor Johnson noted specifically that housing and health care have become huge issues in Vermont due to the high costs and scarcity that have in turn made Vermont much less affordable to live in. "These are big and consequential issues and have the potential to shape state policy for many years."

The candidates that are victorious in the upcoming primaries will indicate what voters are actively concerned about and what they believe needs to change at the state level. Primaries, notably the more competitive ones, are important so that when Vermonters head to the polls once again in November, they can confidently place their vote for a candidate who they know will represent them accurately and with the necessary focus for specific issues.

For college students interested in getting involved in local politics, understanding Vermont's unique, small representative-to-constituent ratio is key. Contacting a local representative can be done by calling their personal mobile or office number, or by sending them an email using, or sending them an email with the help of the Find a Legislator tool on the official Vermont Government website.

For this article, the writers were able to speak with both Senator Hardy and Senator Heffernan on their home phones overon the weekend. In Vermont, legislators genuinelyquite literally respond directly and promptly to the needs of their constituents; they are easily vailable over the phone.all you need to do is give them a ring.

Contacting your local representative is a direct way for constituents to share to share theiryour unique voice, opinions, and ideas with representatives..

Additionally, both the Middlebury Democrats and Middlebury Republicans have connections and contacts with the official Vermont Democratic Party and Vermont Republican Party. With midterms quickly approaching in the fall, both parties are looking for volunteers, and sign-ups are available can be found on their individual websites.

Johnson encourages students to jump right into local politics, registered voter or not.

"What I'd like students to know about Vermont politics is that students have as much of a right to be engaged with Vermont politics as anyone else. There's nothing in the Constitution or the law that says you don't count if you only live in a certain place for four years. To the contrary, it is important that student interests get represented because students will always be here and have an important part to play," said Johnson said.

THE STONE MILL PROVIDES SPRING ALTERNATIVES DURING MUD SEASON

By IZZY RONDA
Local Editor

April in Middlebury marks the arrival of spring and with it, Vermont's mud season. Mud season, usually beginning in March and April, refers to the transition period between winter and spring when snow has melted, leaving muddy conditions.

For students, locals and visitors looking to stay out of the mud, the Stone Mill Public Market in downtown Middlebury offers an alternative activity to hiking: from browsing bright jewelry and spring-scented candles, to enjoying the ambiance on the front patio or back deck overlooking Otter Creek.

The Stone Mill, formerly known as the Frog Hollow Stone Mill, is a historic building on Mill St. in Middlebury, built in 1840. The building now houses a public market on the first floor, a co-working space on the second and four hotel rooms available for booking via Airbnb, on the top floor following a renovation in 2019.

In an interview with The Campus, Mary Garvin, Manager of the Stone Mill, spoke about which new items will be in stock starting this spring.

"My favorite, the beeswax candles from happy organics. We have some fun jewelry, from a company in New York City, in Rockaway near the beach. This stuff is the swell life with all handmade and beaded, really cute. So those I'll be putting out soon," Garvin said.

Garvin added that customers can also find gifts and cards for upcoming occasions such as Mother's Day and graduations, along with the collection of home goods that are consistently in stock.

The market offers snacks and beverages, including iced green tea and Culture Pop sodas, and also features a cafe space that is not currently in operation.

"We have a lot of tea and iced tea and lemonade. So you can sit outside on both of our terraces, the deck," Garvin said.

Though not currently operational, Garvin said the cafe will host pop-up events this spring, including a wine bar scheduled for May 1, and that they are always eager for people to come sit at the tables in the space to work or just spend time there.

"Coming to grab a cold drink, sitting outside meeting friends –– it's a great spot to have a meeting. Hook up to the internet [to] work for a little while in between meetings," Garvin said in reference to the cafe.

"There's the Plein Air Festival that Sparrow art supply is doing, and we're one of the venues where you can sit outside and paint outside," Garvin said, continuing to discuss the outdoor spaces available at the Stone Mill.

The Plein Air Festival, held each spring, invites participants to paint outdoors across Middlebury. Described by Sparrow Art Supplies as "a weekend of outdoor painting, connection, and creative exploration," the event will take place June 12–14.

The Stone Mill attracts a steady stream of customers throughout the year who browse coffee table books and home goods items; a current customer standout are the colorful fruit-shaped candles (such as raspberry, avocado, and blueberry) displayed in a wicker basket on one of the store's tables.

"And then obviously, around any of the big college weekends, we get busier. Holidays are very busy as well. But springtime, I would say, now that people are coming out and they know that we have, you know, cold drinks and gifty things. It's just like getting the word out that we are here," Garvin said.

The store is located next to Otter Creek and shares its building with the Mexican restaurant Mad Taco. Abbey Boyd '26, who works at the Stone Mill Public Market twice a week, commented on the business's location.

"I think the location is beautiful. It's nice now that it's getting nice out, and to see people sort of filter in and out, especially with Mad Taco downstairs too. I also think that being right along the water is very intriguing, and it makes the Stone Mill a nice pit stop," Boyd said.

Boyd said she enjoys working at the Stone Mill and highlighted the store's stationery and gift card selection as some of her favorite items.

"We just put out some new fun spring and summer jewelry too. And also got some new refreshing drinks, which are exciting to stop by and try," Boyd said.

With spring bringing longer days and more activity along Otter Creek, the Stone Mill serves as a pleasant stop for those looking to shop, meet for a quick drink or simply spend time outdoors yet out of the mud this spring in downtown Middlebury.

"We're always trying to encourage people to come up and, you know, shop, bring their food or their drinks. They can sit outside on any of the decks and enjoy it if downstairs is full, and what else," Garvin said.

DO YOU HAVE FAITH IN THE FUTURE OF MIDDLEBURY?

Editorial

The editorial represents the opinion of the Middlebury Campus Editorial Board.

Middlebury College has stood for two hundred and twenty-five years. It has weathered civil wars, financial crashes and global pandemics without disappearing. For most students, that permanence feels like a given. However, it is clearly at a crossroads. An impending demographic cliff, the unprecedented rise in tuition costs, and a countywide lessening faith in higher education prompted us to ask a new question in this year's eighth annual student survey (Zeitgeist 8.0): "Do you have faith in the future of Middlebury?" Generally, respondents said yes, but cautioned that Middlebury has areas it needs to self-reflect on. So what does the future of Middlebury really look like? The Editorial Board offered a reflection on this question.

Zeitgeist respondents cited artificial intelligence (AI) as one of the most concerning factors undermining their faith in Middlebury and in liberal arts education more generally. A wide variety of departments are losing faculty this year, and many students can infer that it is not simply time to retire; professors' morale is noticeably low, particularly when they discuss how AI is transforming their careers. Their exhaustion is palpable, and we don't blame them. But how can students have faith when the very people who foster their intellectual experience don't? Middlebury must treat faculty well-being not as a peripheral concern but as central to its mission, ensuring that professors can continue to serve as inspiring mentors and incredible educators. This is the only way to combat the threats AI poses to the liberal arts. Faculty aside, we must note that staff are increasingly being treated as replaceable. Last spring's $10 million reduction in staff benefits and a partial hiring freeze do not bode well for the college's future as a fair and attractive employer. Catering, dining, facilities, student activities, and library services all reported being understaffed, with current staff being asked to work more than expected.

Then there is the money. The cost of attendance at Middlebury has reached $97,386, making the future hard to imagine for many. Soon, four years at Middlebury will cost nearly twice the average household income in the US. How are students outside the top 1% supposed to have faith in that future? With 23% of students' families earning $800,000 or more annually, and that number only increasing with recent admission trends, Middlebury may become a community of only the wealthy. As it is, 58% of students pay full tuition (that means for every two people you talk to, at least one pays full tuition). Some consequences are already visible, such as our national and global rankings dropping and applications falling to a five-year low. But the harder question is not about these statistics; it is about what Middlebury loses when it becomes a community defined by wealth. The diversity of perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences that make a liberal arts education worth experiencing will not survive the current direction. This is not just an equity problem; it is an intellectual one that threatens the vibrancy of our community.

Nevertheless, despite the dark national trends, Middlebury remains unmistakably alive. President Ian Baucom offers a hopeful demeanor, he is excited, personable, and eager to cultivate community. We can't ignore that, in many ways, the community is still exiting the liminal period that came after Covid-19 and is regrowing and redefining itself. With President Baucom, it feels like the window of potential has truly expanded, and protecting the vibrant, tight-knit Middlebury community that transcends borders and generations feels possible. Middlebury's future will not come from its administrators or financial advisors. It will come from its students, staff, and faculty, and, with President Baucom, it feels as if we have a college administration that understands that.

Within the past month, the student symposium and Nocturne arts festival have made it hard not to believe in Middlebury and the people who give it life. Last Saturday, Nocturne breathed life into campus, talent was tangible in the air, and you could feel the freedom of self-expression emanating amongst everyone. And just two weeks ago, over 250 students passionately presented on important research and learning they have been engaging in. In the age of AI, it is moments like these that feel so precious. Real humans doing things only humans can do, with their eyes lighting up as they talk about their study on neuroplasticity, or singing and dancing their hearts out with an eager audience of friends. This is what imbues us with hope when we think about the future of Middlebury and its potential to be a safe haven for community, expression, and curiosity at a time when those values are hard to truly grow.

The two hundred and twenty-five years that this institution rests on are real and shouldn't go unnoticed. But longevity does not equal vitality. This place, with its intellectually rich and passionately creative students, is not invincible. We take the Zeitgeist responses to be importantly honest, honoring the truth in the fact that many tenants of this institution we love so much are under extreme pressure. However, we must not lose sight of the life that surrounds us every day. We, as Middlebury students, have the power to create community, continue engaging intellectually, and make a meaningful home in our time here. To believe in a bright future for Middlebury makes it just that much more possible.

SUSANNA SCHATZ

WHY YOU SHOULD MAKE ART!

Op-Ed

***Olive Austin** is a member of the class of 2028 and an opinions editor.*

Finding a creative outlet can help reduce stress, strengthen community and promote mental health without demanding too much of your schedule. Arts engagement on campus is an important way not only to build connections but also to take care of ourselves, and you should get involved!

It can be hard to find a work-life balance as we manage school, jobs, sports, clubs, friends and all the other commitments that keep us busy. Especially as the semester wraps up and finals approach, it's normal to feel overwhelmed or stressed — there are so many demands for attention. And even when we relax, it's often with more screens, which can be another drain on our energy. Studies have shown that scrolling can increase fatigue and worsen mental health, with the high level of stimulation leading to cognitive strain that reduces attentional and memory capacity, not to mention the isolating effect that screens often have.

College is the place where we learn to live independently, and it is often difficult to balance our priorities. However (and this sometimes feels like a hot take at Midd), I think your own well-being and happiness should come first, which will, in turn, make you a better student, friend and overall person. Of course, this is a balance in and of itself, and especially around finals, it becomes hard to get enough sleep or feel like you have the time to see friends — let alone spend time taking care of yourself.

But it doesn't take a big time commitment to recenter and find ways to take care of your mental health that don't create additional cognitive strain. One valuable way to do this is by incorporating art or creativity into your schedule, whatever that looks like for you. Whether it's participating in an organized art event or taking a study break to be creative instead of scrolling, the advantages of taking time and space for art justify the effort.

Making art has been shown to benefit mental health by lowering cortisol levels, providing an opportunity to refocus and fostering community. It's not about making a perfect artwork (again, maybe a counter-normative idea at Midd), but more about grounding yourself and taking space from the things that stress you out. In fact, one study showed that just drawing repeated patterns reduced stress and augmented emotional well-being.

Finding an avenue for creativity in your daily routine might feel intimidating, especially if you don't usually find yourself drawn to visual art. But there are countless ways to take a break that might work for you. Whether it's doodling, painting, ceramics, making a friendship bracelet, music, dance, writing or another form of expression, there are ways to fit art into a busy schedule, even if just for a few minutes. Prioritize your well-being, take a break from staring at your computer or phone and make art!

Or, get involved with art on campus through clubs and school-sponsored events. Organizations like Yarn & Yap, the Ceramics club, MiddCAT, Darkroom club, the Atelier sewing club and M-Gallery are just some groups that offer an opportunity to build community while caring for your own well-being through art. Making time to encourage creativity, despite your busy schedule, will benefit you and those around you.

Emilo Real Estate

173 Court Street, Middlebury, VT

Roxanna Emilo, Broker/Realtor/Owner

(802) 349-9837

Christine Fraioli, Realtor

(802) 989-2234

Office: (802) 388-4440

emilovtrealestate@gmail.com

emilorealestate.com

Let Us Sell or Find Your Roost!

What's better than watching people suffer?

Op-Ed

__Zach Marcus__ is a member of the class of 2026.5.

A couple weeks ago, the professional basketball player Jaden Ivey went live on Instagram and criticized the NBA's promotion of Pride Month, resulting in his dismissal from the Chicago Bulls. The video starts with him driving in a car, criticizing the league for celebrating "unrighteousness." As he lays out the argument, you get the sense that he's genuinely confused about some of the specifics. "How can a woman bear a child with a woman? How?" he asks searchingly, his voice cracking. "Unless they go to the doctor, it can't happen physically," he reassures himself. "They have the same body part. Bro, they cannot bear children unless they get something done." (Whatever they could get done is left menacingly unclear.) By this point, he's sitting parked in the driveway and transitions to extolling the beauty of the natural world. "He made things good," Ivey earnestly proclaims. "He made the Sun. If the Sun was ever closer we would burn. But he made it in the proper place so we'd get the proper light in the day. He gave us water to drink," Ivey continues. "If we didn't have water we'd be dehydrated."

The people closest to Ivey believe he's suffering a public mental breakdown. (The video is hardly the only reason why; in another revealing anecdote, Ivey tried to convince the Bulls that he could play through a serious injury, claiming that "Jesus healed my knee" (despite an MRI showing otherwise.) Former teammates and coaches have publicly said they hope he receives help. His wife asked for privacy as "there is obviously a lot more going on." Ivey admitted that much of his family has stopped talking to him, calling him "crazy" and a "psycho."

Unfortunately, some of the most tedious people in the world saw the potential for a juicy, algorithm-friendly culture-war headline that might have looked like "Basketball Player CANCELLED for Preaching the Gospel," and ran with it. "We live in a world that hates Christ and those who believe in Him, but that's to be expected," tweeted conservative activist Riley Gaines. "Just as He was persecuted, so will we be. Consider me a Jaden Ivey fan." Soon, Ivey was on an evangelical podcast revealing the most intimate details of his life: that he was sexually abused as a child, that he himself had abused his wife, that he'd attempted suicide multiple times.

It would be easy to write a piece condemning religious influencers for doing the un-Christian thing of using a vulnerable person's suffering for their personal gain. But as Matthew 7:3-5 wisely instructs, "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own... First take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." So, here's my plank: I watched the video of Ivey and found it funny. I showed it to my friends and they did too. It genuinely sounds like he's discovering gay people for the first time. Still, is it any better to laugh at someone in obvious mental distress than to exploit them?

To a larger degree than we probably realize, the internet's structure mimics bullying. Find the kid who's weird or weak and make jokes at their expense; it's more fun when the victim doesn't get what's going on. This explains the phenomenon of Clavicular, a streamer who supposedly rose to fame because he simulates the experience of (misogynistically) interacting with beautiful women as an attractive man. For his most deranged incel fans, perhaps that's the extent of the appeal. But the reason many people enjoy watching his clips is the subtext of his immense suffering. Here's someone so troubled they smashed their face into place with a hammer; now you get to laugh at the freak as he awkwardly tries to flirt with women who despise him. A couple of weeks ago, he overdosed on a stream and nearly died. Afterwards, he promised to stop abusing drugs but admitted he didn't know if he could stream sober because the anxiety might be too overwhelming.

People are pretty apathetic about this, but I'm not sure why. Sure, the internet isn't real life; these videos just pop up in your feed. You can't possibly be causing someone harm by viewing what they willingly posted. Besides, 1.7 million people had already viewed the video by the time it reached you. But "you are free, therefore choose," philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre instructed. Why are you choosing this? In Norman Rush's novel "Mating", an anthropologist theorizes that young boys require unsupervised play because it teaches them to evolve from fascism to feudalism to democracy. Today, the internet short-circuits that process, channeling our diffuse desire to inflict pain upon others into fifteen-second video clips to smirk at.

Everyone agrees that if you spend too long scrolling, you'll start to feel bad about yourself, the idea being that you've been "rotting" when you could have been doing something more productive. But people don't feel bad about spending time watching movies, drinking with their friends or playing sports. You feel bad because the internet is a prison filled with people suffering for your attention. You know what you're doing online is ugly, that it's wrong to voyeuristically consume another person's suffering, that it's depressing that your moral conscience has shriveled to the point where you can't do something as simple as swipe up with your thumb. Yet you don't have the decency to look away.

You're probably reading this right now on your phone. The odds say that within two minutes, you'll find your way back onto social media. Meanwhile, Clavicular is going to die soon, probably live on his stream. Jaden Ivey is spiraling even deeper, now preaching on street corners. I sincerely hope they both receive help — do you really think they're the only ones who need it?

So you want to go into private equity?

Op-Ed

__Ella Beebe__ is a member of the class of 2029.

As we all trudge through the chore that is the summer internship search, inevitably regretting not having put in more effort towards it during J-Term, I can't help but notice how Middlebury's finance recruitment culture always seems to take center stage. Why does securing an internship in private equity (PE) always seem to grant automatic peer respect in a conversation, leaving behind a tinge of jealousy or even self-deprecation for not having achieved the same? Is it because people actually think private equity is a fulfilling future for themselves, or is it because PE has a nice, prestigious, wealthy ring to it?

Students breaking their backs for a career in private equity should understand that the overextraction and lack of regulation in the industry lead to losses in quality, individuality, and, most importantly, the externalization of risks onto patients, consumers and the climate.

The basic idea behind private equity is that firms pool capital from wealthy individuals and large institutions (such as university endowments and pension funds) and use it to acquire private companies. They work to make those companies more profitable, then return the earnings to their investors. This pressure to return to investors drives the race for short-term profit and maximum extraction. Most firms even buy multiple businesses in the same industry, creating the illusion of choice but running every company the exact same way. Within three blocks, there might be three coffee shops, two laundromats, a dentist office and a hospital, all owned by the same private equity firm. Authentic Brands Group owns Lucky Brand, Champion, Guess, Dockers and Sperry in the same portfolio, likely structuring each business model the same way, using the same manufacturers, but capitalizing on the household brands to feign differentiation.

PE now owns over 20% of the economy, says Harvard professor John Coates, and we have no idea because they're all hiding behind our most beloved store names. Private equity is just too private. Owning such a large chunk of the American economy is dangerous without any regulation or reporting measures, and it jeopardizes market competitiveness, unleashing the worst side of capitalism. We're losing control over the American economy, and we have no choice but to let it happen because private equity-owned businesses dominate industries essential to our day-to-day lives: healthcare, apartments, groceries, manufacturers, and distributors. It's become private equity's world, and we're just living in it.

Ever wonder why you walk into Blank Street or Pop-up Bagel, a Cava or Sunglass Hut and it all feels like the same store with a slightly different font? Sans-serif scripts, felt board menus, subway tile walls with slatted wooden counters. They're not designed like that because all of your local storefront owners have a similar, trendy eye; it's that those companies have been bought by PE and are being remodeled to whatever look and feel is making the most money at that moment. Or maybe you haven't noticed — that's exactly the intent. These stores are modeled off companies that you've grown to find comforting and trustworthy. But PE is doing everything it can to make you a loyal patron without the company having to put in the funds and effort required to improve its product.

This rejection of personality or individuality contributes to that familiar monoculture we all feel closing in on every aspect of our lives. The lack of emphasis on product improvement and the tunnel-vision focus on squeezing as much profit as possible from a company at the lowest cost are the most dangerous aspects. It's what leads to "enshittification", a term coined by author Cory Doctorow, which exposes how tech companies deliberately degrade software services and online platforms to squeeze the most profit out of users and advertisers. The same concept applies to physical products: Once a company figures out how to lock you in and gain your trust, they can start pricing higher and higher and care less and less about what they're selling you.

It is particularly disturbing that PE restructuring methods, such as staff reductions and cuts to operational funds, can come with a human toll. Take the healthcare sector: now we're not just considering the loss of livelihoods through job loss or cost-of-living crises, we're talking life and death. A 2021 University of Chicago study found that PE-owned nursing homes, hospitals and emergency rooms experienced significant increases in mortality after PE firms took ownership. Private-equity ownership of nursing homes increased the short-term mortality of Medicare patients by 10%, which implies about 20,150 lives lost over the 12-year sample period. The idea that finance gurus (who have spent most of their lives at a laptop) can do a better job of structuring profitable businesses than industry professionals is completely skewed, and it's perpetuated by the respect we give to people in high-status finance jobs.

So you want to go into private equity? I'm not calling you a bad person — there are firms out there doing the right thing (consider smaller impact investment firms with responsible reporting practices, like EQT, Blue Earth Capital or Riverside). But is enabling the societal net-negatives that the most elite firms breed the best use of your good education and goodwill? Can you justify the paycheck while simultaneously contributing to the worst parts of capitalism and exacerbating problems like climate change, inflation and inequality? Feigning ignorance isn't an option at a place like Middlebury, even if "everyone else is doing it." If you believe PE is your calling, go for it, but don't confuse prestige for purpose. Your incredible work ethic, $94,000-per-year education and the privilege of having the financial freedom to choose a meaningful career should be used to benefit the world. I believe that profit can be synonymous with authenticity and innovation, but PE advocates for the opposite.

The Middlebury Campus

EDITOR IN CHIEF
*Mandy Berghela**
MANAGING EDITORS
*Yuvraj Shah**
NEWS
Cole Chaudhari †*
*Kai Arrowood**
*Noor Khan**
*Met Ly**
Luke Power
*Rachelle Talbert**
LOCAL
Katrina Schwarz †*
Izzy Ronda
Agnes Wang
Violet Wexler
OPINIONS
Curran Amster †*
*Olive Austin**
*Katherine Goodman**
*Sailor Kabeary**
*Lucy Schembre**
*AJ Slocum**
*Luli Sabella-Capuano**
EDITORIAL BOARD DIRECTOR
*Gabriella Gerig**
ARTS & CULTURE
Ellie Trinkle †*
Christy Liang
YouYou Zhang
SPORTS
Simon Schmieder †*
*Kanan Clifford**
Brooke Friberg
Thie Harthono
*Theo Maniatis**
EDITORS AT LARGE
*Maya Alexander**
Hugo Zhang
DESIGN DIRECTOR
*Joanne Zhang**
DIGITAL DIRECTOR
Kayleigh Christley
COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR
Lucy Curtis-Cherry
LAYOUT
Eliza Liebo
Theo Maniatis
Lizi Schierman
Gideon Wolf
ONLINE
Amador Abiuso
Mattea Fisher
Sheila Lam
India Wickers
BUSINESS DIRECTOR
G Pradhan
COPY
Lydia Dercksen
Logan Gouss
Genevieve Stone

** Member of Editorial Board*
† Senior Editor

The Campus reserves the right to deny publication of all or part of a submission for any reason. This includes, but is not limited to: the making of assertions based on hearsay; the relation of private conversations; the libelous mention of unverifiable events; the use of vulgar language or personal attacks; unwarranted requests for anonymity. The Middlebury Campus is part of Middlebury College, which is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization; we do not publish political statements from candidates.

A timeline for submitting an opinions piece can be found on our website. All final decisions about publication are at the discretion of the executive team More information about the paper and its submission policies can be found online at www.middleburycampus.com.

The opinions expressed by contributors to the Opinions section, as well as reviews, columns, editorial comics and other commentary, are views of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the newspaper.

The Campus welcomes letters to the editor at 250 words or less, though longer letters will be considered, or opinions submissions between 700 and 900 words.

To submit an op-ed, learn more about article and op-ed guidelines or receive further guidance, please email campus@middlebury.edu. (Or visit our website to submit an anonymous tip).

@middleburycampus

FEATURE: AFGHAN COLLECTIVE 'ARTLORDS' PAINTS A NEW MURAL IN PROCTOR

By SARAH ROGERS
Visiting Assistant Professor of History of Art & Architectural Studies

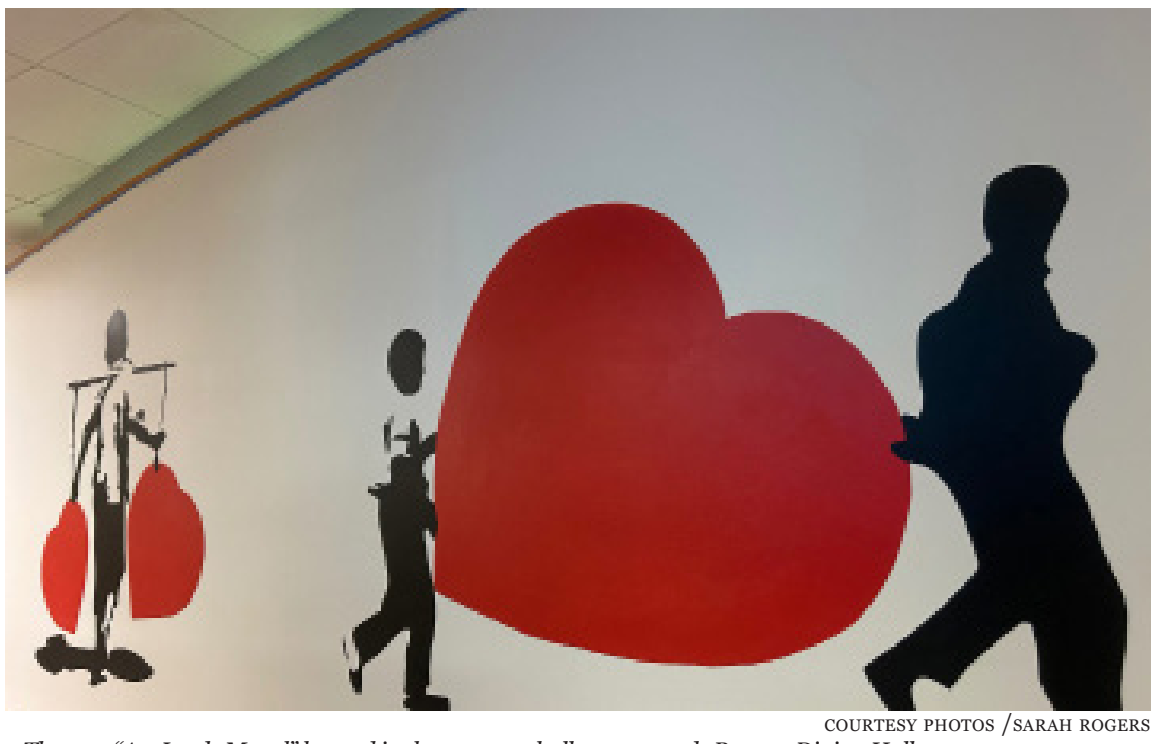
On April 24 and 25, members of the Middlebury College community joined artists Abdullah Elhan, Negina Azimi, Marwa Azimi, Zuhra Nadem, and Sean Kiziltan, five members of ArtLords. Established in Kabul, Afghanistan, in 2014, this collective of Afghan artists transformed the city's blast walls into powerful social-justice murals. The designs here are a few of the original murals that the Taliban have since whitewashed and are now being recreated and preserved.

One of the paintings features text taken from the poem "Ney Namah" by the 13th-century Persian poet Mawlana Jalaluddin Mohammad Balkhi, also known as "Rumi." The style of Persian calligraphy is called Shekasta-Nastaliq. Translated from Farsi to English by Associate Muslim Chaplain and Interfaith Advisor Zahra Meybodi Moeini, Sajia Yaqouby '25.5, and Abdullah Elhan, the text reads:

Listen to the reed flute, as it recounts / Complaining of the separation / They have uprooted me from the reedbed / Men and women lament in agony from my cries / Whoever remains distant from their roots / One day, again, they will seek to reunite

The mural and painting initiative was organized by history of art & architecture major Sajia Yaqouby '25.5 and Visiting Assistant Professor of History of Art & Architectural Studies Sarah Rogers. It was sponsored by the Committee on Art in Public Spaces, the Middlebury College Museum of Art, the Committee of the Arts, Department of the History of Art and Architecture, International & Global Studies-Middle East and North Africa, Axinn Center for the Humanities — Mellon Humanities for All Times Initiative, Elizabeth Hackett Robinson '84 Innovation Hub and Office of Equity.

We are grateful for discussions around the mural's design with History of Art & Architecture courses: Art, Migration, and Museums (Fall 2024 and Fall 2025) and Modern Art (Fall 2025).

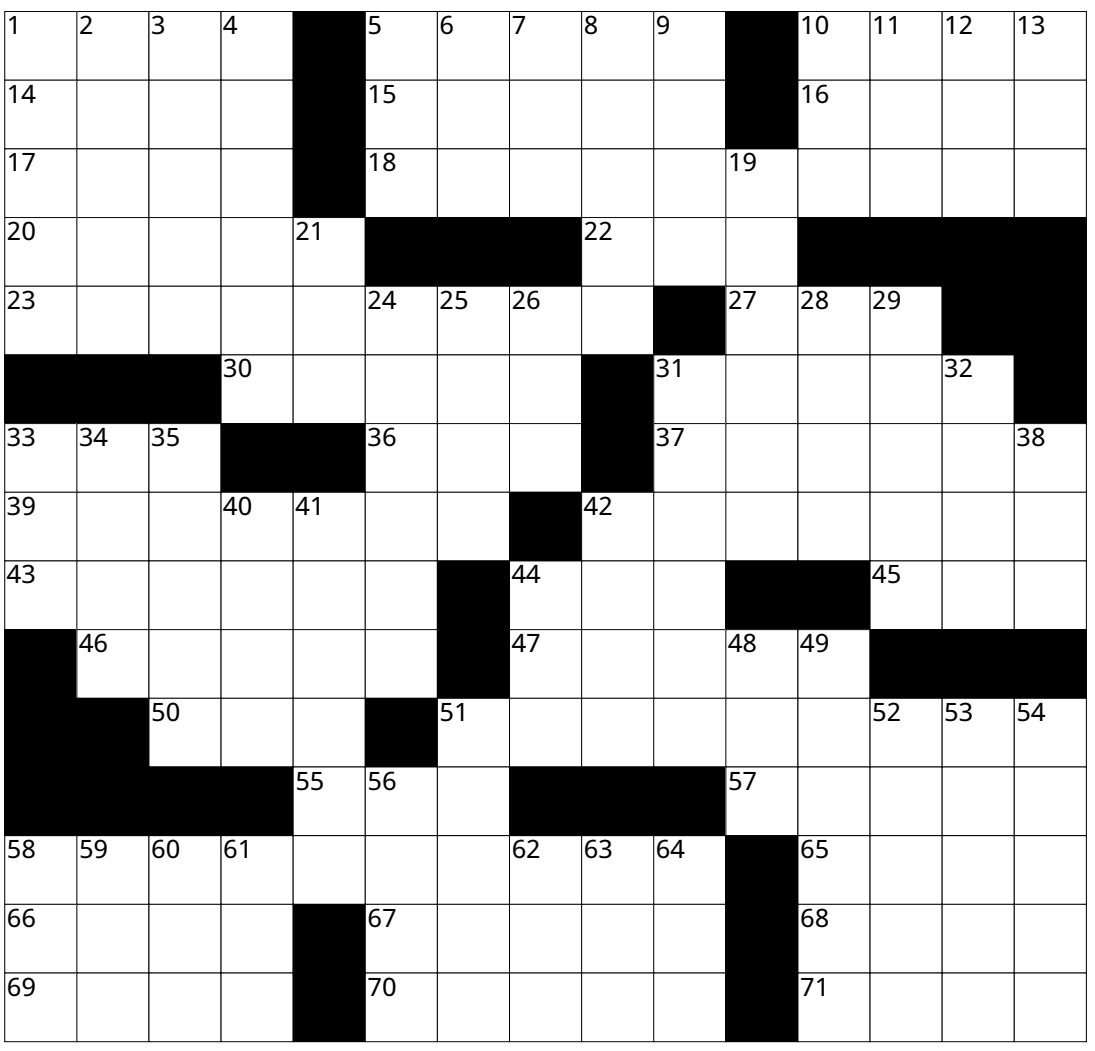


COURTESY PHOTOS / SARAH ROGERS

1. The new "Art Lords Mural" located in the entrance hallway towards Proctor Dining Hall.
2. Students painting parts of the mural

Highlight Reel

Egan Turner



ACROSS
1 Small obstacle
5 Super speedy
10 Throw lightly
14 Running shoe brand
15 ___ acid
16 19-Down's second-biggest island
17 Thor and Loki's father
18 One who loves giving thumbs ups?
20 Surpass
22 Tiny battery
23 Indian who constructed the Taj Mahal
27 "For what reason?"
30 Religion that praises Allah
31 ___ tots
33 Large primate
36 Jean-___ Picard
37 WWII German dictator
39 Painter, musician, and photographer
42 Homer Harris House's nickname, and a hint for 18-Across, 23-Across, 43-Across, 51-Across, and 58-Across
43 Santa Claus line
44 "Eureka!"
45 Bay Area airport
46 "Same here!"
47 Cheeky
50 Cambodian neighbor
51 Smallest dog breed
55 Lunch's closing time at Middlebury
57 Reads a bar code
58 USSR leader during the Cuban Missile Crisis
65 Pelvic joints
66 Travis Scott song that says the title 65 times
67 Pizzazz
68 Leaves home?
69 Shoe with Jibbitz
70 Papas' counterparts
71 Tax ID nos.

DOWN
1 Drives away?
2 "Obviously!"
3 Japanese dog breed
4 Indian nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize five times, but never won
5 Stadium cheer
6 Bordeaux buddy
7 In the middle of a date?
8 Like Machu Picchu
9 Qatar capital
10 Texter's "I've heard enough!"
11 Acorn producer
12 Take legal action against
13 Title for David Attenborough and Lewis Hamilton
19 Only U.S. state with multiple official languages
21 Breakfast beverages, briefly
24 Taylor Swift's "___ Well"
25 Deutschland dwelling
26 "Breaking Bad" network
28 URL starter
29 Raises one's voice
31 Defeat decisively
32 Coral structure
33 Ooh and ___
34 The last dance?
35 "American Teenager" singer Cain
38 Pi follower
40 Theta follower
41 Photographer's gigs
42 Cambodian neighbor
44 ___ Wednesday
48 Dubious, in "Among Us"
49 Expensive boats
51 Rich winter beverage
52 Thin margins
53 Let loose
54 Burros
56 "For ___ the Bell Tolls"
58 Colonel Sanders' chain
59 She/___
60 Spanish river
61 Chapel Hill sch.
62 "Let me think..."
63 Green org.
64 Videotape format

NOCTURNE: A TESTAMENT TO MIDDLEBURY STUDENTS' UNMATCHED TALENT AND CREATIVITY

By MAYA ALEXANDER
Editor-at-Large

Nothing can quite beat the creative energy that floods Middlebury's campus each year during Nocturne. After two years pushed inside by rain, singers, artists, students, faculty and community members finally had a chance to experience the full potential of the annual arts festival: trees lit with colorful lanterns, raw vocals vibrating through the open air and an all-around uplifting atmosphere as Middlebury heads into spring and warmer weather.

Spirits were high as the night launched off with line dancing and noshing outside the Mahaney Arts Center (MAC). I then headed over to the majestically lit Chapel for Clover Magazine's first-ever fashion show, which exhibited a wide range of student work and pieces from local designers. Fellow students strutted down the runway, bringing the traditional Chapel architecture together with a bold, fresh and eclectic energy. Over 100 people filled the Chapel benches to the brim, a promising outlook for the future of the already thriving magazine.

I was then ready to snack more, unapologetically. I headed over to Axinn and had the delight of trying various teas that were grown at our very own Middlebury Knoll. A stand over, my friend Skiles Roberts-Salvador '26 drew a portrait of two of my other dear friends and me before offering us crab rangoon, crisp dumplings filled with crab. Inside Axinn, I stopped by Infinite Mukbang, inspired by a popular online trend in which hosts eat copious amounts of food; students were certainly happy with the free ramen they could grab.

Before stepping into the Aberthany Room to watch the Mamajamas' incredible acapella performance, I caught a glimpse of ChazGPT, where Chaz Witter '28.5 wittingly (no pun intended) created a real-life version of ChatGPT, responding to students' questions on his computer that was reflected on the screen.

Stepping back outside, I found a group of my friends (who organized the night, big shout out!) gathered joyfully at Lil Butter's set. A locally based rapper from Vergennes, he pulled in the audience's attention with infectious energy. Nearby on the main quad, the musical energy continued as I watched my friends spin the wheel of genres like "EMO PROM" and "y'allternative" at the WRMC booth. Players had to guess the tune from the first few seconds of a song; those who succeeded were doused with silly bands and dinosaur stickers.

On the way to a brief stint back home, I had my fortune told by Dylan Meyer '28. The result? I did such a poor job painting my nails that they determined that I must be blind, so they handed me a pair of glasses (unfortunately, I already wear contacts).

Back outside, I stopped at some of the art installations, ranging from M-Gallery's glistening, metallic time machine featuring a robot to more shiny cyborgs at SNEGturn.

I then made it back to Wilson Hall, where I had the pleasure of enjoying On Reserve's gripping performance with covers of "Live Well" and "Hotel California," a classic for Nocturne live shows. Afterwards, I gathered on the Davis Family Library patio steps with my friends and was blessed with more visceral vocals from Sailor Kabeary '26.5 and Nick Penniman '26.5. Never failing to attract a massive audience, they sang both covers and original music.

A few steps away was a loop of mesmerizing senior film theses, projected onto the stone wall of Painter Hall. I had the pleasure of seeing my friend Neel Shah '26, dressed up as this year's Nocturne mascot, a wolf, catch his own short film, which he composed this past summer in L.A.

We continued strolling along the path, passing "It Happens Here," a powerful commentary on sexual violence, composed of a clothing line of garments hung between two trees, each piece painted with a powerful message and a call to action. A hoodie printed with the message "I was wearing this" served as a poignant reminder of the impact art can have on activism.

The rest of my night was largely spent back in Wilson Hall. I caught the end of K!ND's act before dancing along to Vampire Weekend's electric tunes, which were a prerequisite to the moment many were waiting for: the midnight event performed by The Tares. I swayed and blew bubbles with my friends as we sang along to their, as always, captivating vocals: a perfect, wholesome end to my last Nocturne.

In a time where we are so worried about A.I. and technology stripping away our creativity, critical thinking and person-to-person engagement, Nocturne proves that Middlebury students prevail. Our campus continues to bloom with unmatched talent and a drive to connect and create, despite threats to take away these unique qualities.

Editor's Note: Nocturne President Ellie Trinkle '26 is the Senior Arts & Culture Editor. The Tares member Curran Amster '26 is the Senior Opinions Editor. Sailor Kabeary '26.5 is an Opinions editor. Nick Penniman '26.5 is a contributing writer.

We can't help it that there is such overlap between Nocturne and The Campus.

1. *Line dancing at the Pre Event at the Mahaney Center for the Arts.*
2. *Nick & Sailor performing outside Davis Family Library.*
3. *Student films projected on Painter wall.*

COURTESY PHOTOS / NOCTURNE

CONVERSATIONAL ART: LIEFE TEMPLE

By CHRISTY LIANG
Arts & Culture Editor

Christy Liang: Who are you as an artist?

Liefe Temple '25.5: I am a dancer. That is my art. I would say I am fairly new to considering myself an artist. Before I started at Middlebury, I wasn't. I danced for fun growing up, and I thought I would continue doing that here. But then I met the dance department, started taking classes and realized I could study dance seriously. I found such a home there. There is so much love and intellectualism in that space. Primarily, I am a dancer, but I also do fiber arts. I like to sew and knit. Those are hobbies, but they are artistic too.

CL: How did you first discover dance, and how has your relationship with it evolved?

LT: I started dancing when I was two and a half. My parents enrolled me in a "dance for babies" summer ballet camp, and I stayed with that same studio my whole life growing up. I made really close friends there. It was a big part of my social life, especially in high school. At first, dance was just fun. It was something that balanced schoolwork. I would sit and read and write, and then I would dance. They felt very separate. At Middlebury, that changed. I have been able to combine them. I can experience academic rigor in my body, in the studio, and that feels like research and learning. At the same time, I can sit and read about dance. That merging of what I love studying and what I love doing has been the biggest shift.

CL: As an English and Dance joint major, how do you see the relationship between text and movement?

LT: I have been thinking about this I have been thinking about this a lot, especially while working on my thesis and thinking about what comes next. I see both dance and literature as ways of expressing things that are hard to explain. How do you communicate your feelings? When you read a really good book, you feel like you are there. When you see a really good dance, it makes you feel something or wonder something or think about something big. Dance has given me an embodied perspective on reading. Now when I read, I notice how bodies move in text. Not just dance, but posture, gesture, how people exist in space. It is like visualizing movement even in stillness. The two disciplines really work together for me.

CL: What were your thesis projects about?

LT: I did two thesis projects, one for each department. For dance, I created a piece centered on the idea of dancers as embodied archives. I worked with five dancers and drew on my experience working in Special Collections and Archives at the library. For English, I built on that work. I used "Mrs. Dalloway" and its dance adaptation, "Woolf Works" by Wayne McGregor as a case study. I explored adaptation theory, how a story moves from one artistic medium to another, what gets lost, what is gained, and what choices are made. In that sense, my English thesis looked at dance as an archive of literature, while my dance thesis explored the body as an archive itself. They are connected, but distinct.

CL: Can you say more about the body as an archive?

LT: The idea started with thinking about how expansive the term "archive" has become. It can mean a physical place, a collection of objects, or even a cultural canon. For me, the body as an archive means recognizing that we carry history within us. Our experiences and our past live in our bodies. In dance especially, choreography and tradition are passed down through bodies. You can record or write about dance, but it is not the same as learning it directly from another person. I'm sure you like to experience some of these feelings or ideas like learning Bhuto with Meshi.

CL: Since I'm such a Woolf fan, can you talk more about the "Mrs. Dalloway" adaptation?

LT: I chose "Woolf Works" somewhat unexpectedly. It was what I had access to. It is not a direct adaptation, which made the project more complex. Wayne McGregor describes it not as an adaptation but as a kind of retelling. The ballet has three parts, each corresponding to a different work by Virginia Woolf. The "Mrs. Dalloway" section is called "I Now, I Then." He does not just adapt the novel. He adapts Woolf's writing more broadly. For example, the show opens with text from an essay, not the novel. One major change is that Clarissa and Septimus, who never meet in the book, share a duet in the ballet. They physically interact, touching and partnering, which creates a different meaning in a dance context.

CL: How do you create your own dances?

LT: I am still figuring out my process. Most of the dances I have made have been for class, so they start with a prompt. I have learned that where a piece starts and where it ends can be very different. For example, I made a dance with two friends that began with the idea of rivers. That gave us structure and a starting point. Over time, we realized it was not really about rivers anymore. It became about us and our collaboration. The initial idea helped us begin, but it evolved into something else.

CL: Does it matter if the audience understands your intended meaning?

LT: I used to think it did. I wanted to know what a dance meant. But I have learned that meaning does not have to be fixed. Whatever an audience member feels or interprets is valid. Even if it is not what the creator intended, it is still meaningful. At the same time, as a creator, it is easy to get attached to an idea, like insisting a dance is about rivers. But sometimes that does not translate, and that is okay. Not everything has to be communicated clearly. Each audience member brings their own experiences, their own archive, to what they see.

CL: Can you talk about your piece "Current"?

LT: We needed a title for the program, so we chose "Current." I like that it has a water connotation but also refers to the present moment. The dance started with the idea of rivers, but it became more about the three of us wanting to dance together and create something. It reflects what we were working on at that time. It's current, like right now.

CL: Do you have mentors in the dance department?

LT: Yes, I love the dance department. All the professors work well together. My advisor is Lida Winfield. I have worked with her on several projects and assisted her on a conflict transformation project. Meshi advised my thesis and contributed a lot to that work. Right now, I am working closely with Professor Christal Brown in her course "From Africa to the Americas." She has been an incredible mentor in dance and beyond.

CL: Can you talk about your trip to Ghana?

LT: We were there for a week, which felt very short. We spent time at the University of Ghana, learning traditional dances from the Ghana Dance Ensemble. These were dances from different regions, including ones tied to fishing communities and warrior traditions. We also visited Cape Coast Castle and saw the slave dungeons. That was a very powerful experience. We participated in drumming workshops, visited a village and experienced a welcoming communal environment with food, dancing and performance. It was physically intense. It was hot and exhausting, and very different from dancing here. Even though the trip was short, we had prepared for months beforehand. That preparation helped us fully engage while we were there and carry those experiences back with us.

CL: What are your post-graduation plans?

LT: I am applying to graduate programs in library and information science. I see myself working in libraries long-term, but I do not think that means I will stop dancing. I want to bring an embodied perspective into library spaces through programming, community engagement or research. I am interested in performing arts libraries, like the dance division at the New York Public Library, or academic settings where I could work alongside dance departments. I want to continue both dance and libraries as central parts of my life.

NOAH KAHAN IS EMBRACING HIS VULNERABLE SIDE AND SOME CLASSIC NEW ENGLAND CHARM IN "NOAH KAHAN: OUT OF BODY"

By PHOEBE ADLER
Staff Writer

When you sell out two nights at Fenway Park and become buddies with Bernie Sanders in the span of a year, you must have done something right. Or maybe you just happen to be well-versed in the places and people who make up New England. Either way, Noah Kahan did both — and he has not stopped there.

Kahan, 29, the singer-songwriter who rose to fame during the pandemic and with the release of his 2022 album "Stick Season," has returned to the spotlight with his new album, "The Great Divide," and an accompanying documentary, "Noah Kahan: Out of Body," which were released on April 13 and 24, respectively.

Kahan is no stranger to sharing his life through songs. If you listen to "Stick Season," it does not take long to start imagining Kahan's childhood and life before fame. As Kahan puts it in his song, Homesick: "I'm mean because I grew up in New England." Attendees of the "Stick Season (We'll All be Here Forever) Tour" could be found screaming such lyrics at Kahan around the world.

"Out of Body" gives a look into Kahan in the midst of his rise to massive fame, opening with the lead-up to Kahan's two nights at Fenway Park in Boston. With fans beginning to line up outside of the park as early as 2:00 A.M., running to get as close to the stage as possible once the doors opened, chanting Kahan's name while waiting, to say that the singer was stressed would be an understatement.

Suddenly, the noise cuts out. Viewers are transported to Kahan's hometown of Strafford, Vt., where everyone has seen his success, from local residents with favorite songs to store owners selling merchandise with his face on it. It is also where several of his family members live and where Kahan enjoys spending time when possible, as it is free of the usual chaos in his life. Home videos of Kahan growing up — he describes himself as a typical middle child — show him and his three siblings yelling and shouting, and his mother playfully saying to the camera, "I hope you all watch this before you decide to have kids." In Strafford, Kahan has the opportunity to bond with his brother, Richard, who works in Hanover, New Hampshire, as a firefighter, where he jokes, "What's more dangerous — a firefighter-blacksmith or singer-songwriter with folk pop tendencies?" Home is where the heart is, and, as much as he loves his "dangerous" job, Kahan's heart remains in Strafford despite the familial changes since his childhood.

Kahan's parents divorced during the pandemic, a theme in many of Kahan's most popular songs. This was around the time when Kahan rose to fame online, primarily through TikTok and Instagram. Based out of his dad's house, Kahan wrote hits such as "Homesick" and "Come Over" on his desk and performed them online. After years of songwriting, it was around this time that, according to Kahan, "It finally felt like there was some kind of story in the music."

But as his fame grew, Kahan found himself getting lost in it and missing home, noting in a conversation with his sister that, "I'm always homesick." The stress that accompanied touring, including doing press for "Stick Season," and facing huge crowds while singing about some of the most personal aspects of one's life, is a daunting task, and for Kahan, it was no different. This affected Kahan's life in numerous ways, from his mental and physical health to the production of his music post the massive success of "Stick Season." In an interview with The Hollywood Reporter, Nick Sweeney, the director of "Out of Body," mentioned that these effects impacted the material shot for the documentary, explaining that, "The thing that really interests me is seeing people at crossroads in their life as they grapple with these big questions. As soon as Noah and I started talking, it was so clear that he was dealing with these really significant questions in his life about who he was, where was his home and what was he going to do next after this gargantuan album."

Kahan experiences imposter syndrome throughout "Out of Body." In one sequence, he struggles through over a dozen takes to record the beginning of a song, growing increasingly frustrated with himself in the process. Other clips show him getting ready for a press day and writing on a piece of paper for the camera (Kahan was on vocal rest): "They are putting lipstick on a cow." However, the candour Kahan shows about his mental health is important and adds a lot to the documentary.

In particular, Kahan is extremely vulnerable about his struggles with his physical appearance. He addresses a 15-year struggle that he has had with exercising regularly, body dysmorphia and disordered eating — and the regret he has in not discussing it. He gets visibly emotional as he explains that, "I have done myself a disservice by not opening up about it."

Kahan is trying to change that narrative; however, he is the founder of The Busyhead Project — a non-profit mental health organization that "aims to end the stigma around mental health and improve access to resources." The organization has raised over $6.6 million to support community-based organizations globally since its founding in 2023.

COURTESY PHOTO/NOAH KAHAN
Album cover for "The Great Divide", Noah Kahan's latest album release.

I have not been a fan of Noah Kahan for very long — I really got into "Stick Season" in 2024 and 2025 while he was not releasing new music — but in surrounding myself with friends who were huge fans, I continued to listen to his work, slowly expanding my knowledge and beginning to understand how he gained such success.

There has certainly been an upward trend in what some may consider to be "sad girl music," but Kahan's songs are different. His music has such specificity about growing up as a middle child in a small-town New England, surrounded by chaos yet still cherishing it. He addresses the complexities in having divorced parents and processing the effects of witnessing his father's recovery from a traumatic brain injury as a teenager, which he notes as a significant turning point in the two's relationship. But above all, Kahan's presence in the music industry is reassuring to his millions of fans, many of whom have faced similar challenges, whether familial, mental or otherwise. At an event hosted by The Busyhead Project, many of Kahan's fans express just this, with one fan noting that "His music has become an outlet for so many people, talking about mental health, and it's okay to not be okay."

At the end of the day, Kahan embraces vulnerability and mental health challenges he has faced, primarily as an adult, not to "cure" them, but to address them in a more constructive manner — or as he puts it, "poking it with a stick." "Out of Body" and "The Great Divide" are perfect examples of that poking, as Kahan demonstrates his dedication to staying open in his music and navigating the challenges that come with it. It is not an easy task, but given the massive success Kahan has had thus far with "The Great Divide," listeners seem to really resonate with the album and viewers with the documentary. As Kahan puts it, "There is no…happy ending or full-circle moment. It's waking up every day and trying."

TAPPED-IN: STEEPLECHASE

By SIMON SCHMIEDER
Senior Sports Editor

Among the more peculiar events of track & field are the javelin, pole vault and triple jump: Launching a spear, launching yourself with a spear of sorts, and tactical skipping into a sandbox. Then there is the steeplechase: roughly seven laps on the track, 28 regular barriers, and seven water jumps. In honor of the recent NESCAC track & field championship, I explore the archaic discipline and share some Panthers' perspectives on this issue of Tapped-in.

Last weekend, the men's and women's track & field programs traveled to Williamstown, MA, for the conference meet. The Panthers claimed numerous individual titles and broke multiple school records across Saturday and Sunday. Caleb Smith '27 set a new school record in the long jump, the men's 4x400 meter relay broke the NESCAC meet record, and Toby Warmack '29 broke the school record in the high jump (at 6.66 feet). In-form Lily Wurtz '26 broke her own school record and won the individual title in the discus, the 4x100 meter relay reset their own school record from last week, and Lily Haskins-Vaughan '29 recorded a dominant win in the high jump.

Overall, the men's team finished in third, 18 points behind Amherst's 159. Middlebury's women placed fourth, as Tufts won their first title in over a decade. A closer look at the results reveals a trend across both of the Panthers' programs. Middlebury fielded eight total runners in the steeplechase, all of whom ran in their respective fast heats. In fact, the men's steeplechasers alone scored as many points as the entire Connecticut College men's team.

The steeplechase is said to be named after a racing discipline, either on horseback or on foot, that originated in the British Isles in the 18th century. Church steeples were often the most prominent landmarks, and competitors would race from steeple to steeple. In between were the obstacles one might expect in the countryside—boulders, fences, walls, rivers and streams.

Standardizing the race meant putting athletes on the track, replacing walls with barriers and digging water pits for streams. Today, the race is 3000 meters long, requiring athletes to clear four standard barriers and leap over the water pit once per lap. The pit is 12 feet long and just over two feet deep

COURTESY PHOTO / GEORGE MADISON
Ian Larkin '29 mid-flight in the steeplechase at the Mangrum Invitational in San Marcos, CA.

by the barrier, sloping up along the landing zone. The barriers are three feet tall for men and two and a half feet tall for women — not to be underestimated on the last lap, with lactic acid pooling and legs screaming.

The distance, barriers and water pits combine to form a volatile race. As Owen Johnson '26 explained, "either it will go really well, or it can go really badly. There [are] very few mediocre steeple races." It only takes a push from your competition or slight hesitation approaching a jump and an entire race can fall apart. As such, it takes a certain focus and fortitude to steeple well.

"You could be the fastest 5k guy in the NESCAC, but if you don't have grit or the technical ability to get over 35 hurdles, you just don't stand a chance in the race," Janie Morganroth '26 said.

The grit necessary in the steeplechase makes for purer racing. Johnson, who placed second at the championship meet with a 16-second personal best, leans into the elbows-out nature of the discipline. "My favorite thing is hurdling next to people. It feels like you're more involved with the other people in the race," Johnson said. True to his word, Johnson and the lead runner from Williams exchanged their share of words and shoulder-to-shoulder contact throughout Sunday's race.

Led by coach Bruce Ingersoll, Middlebury's steeple contingent has established a winning culture over the past few seasons. "It has become a point of pride and we keep attracting the right athletes," Ingersoll said. "It is really fun and everyone is 'in' to what we are doing." The unique event group has almost become a team in itself. Heading into the NESCAC meet, the women's steeplechase runners were ranked first in Division III by average time. The steeplers have also developed their own traditions, epitomized by their end-of-season ceremony in which the seniors sign the wooden practice steeple that Ingersoll built several years ago.

Middlebury's steeplechasers have a promising future. Numerous first years featured for the Panthers at the NESCAC meet, including Grace Kaelber '29, who, in her second steeplechase ever, earned third with a time fast enough to possibly qualify for the NCAA national meet.

"When I raced [the steeplechase] for the first time, it was super nice to just get out there and be in the race, not worrying about the time or the end result but just being in the moment…. just appreciating the fun of putting yourself out there and seeing what you can do."

Ian Larkin '29, one of Middlebury's four runners in the top eight in the men's steeplechase, has embraced the volatility of the event.

"Being a first year doing steeple it's been super valuable to approach it from an 'anything can happen' mindset and just have fun with each race. That allows us to learn the most from each race rather than being attached to some specific goal."

In light of all its quirks, the steeplechase maintains the same archaic fence-hopping, frenzied creek-leaping spirit. It's a race that has become a speciality for Middlebury's track & field program, one that demands a certain focus and offers a change of pace for distance runners. The Panthers' stellar performance at this year's NESCAC championship is a testament to a growing legacy, and if you ever happen upon the big barriers and water pit yourself, let it be a reminder of coach Ingersoll's extraordinary steeple people.

SOFTBALL SPLITS SERIES WITH AMHERST AS PLAYOFFS APPROACH

By THEO MANIATIS
Sports Editor

The 26–7 Middlebury softball team split a two-game series against Amherst last weekend. The Panthers have cooled off recently ahead of the playoffs, following a blistering start to the season.

The team split a doubleheader at Williams the day before arriving at Amherst. In the first game, McKenna Lont '26 struggled in the first game for the Panthers, giving up four runs over the first two innings. But Middlebury responded in the third inning, knotting the game at 4-4 thanks to RBI singles by Olivia Fleming '28 and Jen Westphal '26.

In the fourth, Kristyn Carroll '26 launched a home run to center field that sailed dangerously near some cars parked just beyond the fence. "One of my biggest things when I get in the box is that I don't want to think too much," Carroll said. "Making sure I stay within myself and getting a solid hit — and it worked out."

Carroll is batting .513 on the season and is chasing the single-season record set by Emma Hamilton in 2016 at .521. She attributes her success to playing non-stop tournaments when she was younger. "In the moment, it feels like so much," Carroll explained. "But I think that has really paid off for me."

Middlebury tacked on two more runs in the sixth inning to make it 8-4. After Lont's shaky start, Emily Ye '28 tossed three scoreless innings before giving up two runs in the bottom of the sixth. The Mammoths brought the tying run to the plate in the bottom of the seventh, but Emily Dowd '29 forced a popout to close out the game.

Dowd stayed warm and started the second game of the twin bill, continuing her dominant campaign. She has pitched almost 80 innings with a 2.02 ERA and is the first Panther rookie pitcher to have 10 or more wins since Emily Morris '21 in 2018.

The game was mostly uneventful up until the third inning when Carroll reached on a fielder's choice. She then stole second base, her 29th of the year, before dashing for third on a passed ball. Unfortunately, 90 feet away was the closest Middlebury came to scoring all game.

Amherst came to life in the bottom of the fourth inning, helped on by a few Middlebury errors. After a bunt to reach first, a Mammoth batter reached third on two consecutive wild pitches. Dowd struck out the next batter, then gave up a weak groundball to the second baseman, whose errant throw allowed Amherst to score. Amherst took a 3-0 lead following two more Middlebury errors and a sacrifice bunt. The Middlebury offense couldn't produce any runs, although two runners reached base in the top of the seventh. With the win, Amherst improved its record to a dismal 10-22.

COURTESY PHOTO / ANDY GOBIN
Along with McKenna Lont' 26, Kristyn Carroll '26 broke the program record for games played, reaching 143 appearances each.

The Panthers headed home sitting at fifth place in the NESCAC standings with four games left before the playoffs. Although boasting an impressive record, the team struggled in its recent spate of games against NESCAC opponents, who tend to field competitive teams. Last weekend, they lost three of four games to 14th-ranked Colby and 12th-ranked Tufts.

However, Carroll remains confident that the Panthers can hoist the NESCAC trophy for the first time since 2010: "We can definitely go a long way if we just all stick together for the rest of the season."

JOYRIDING: MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE CYCLING

By SIMON SCHMIEDER
Senior Sports Editor

In Tamar Mayer Professor of Geography Peter Nelson's 'Rural Geography' course last fall, each Monday began with the same question: Did you do anything rural this weekend? Some students shared stories of apple picking, others recapped camping trips, and one at the start of one class that semester, Wren Capra '28 casually dropped that she had ridden her bike from Burlington to Montreal.

Capra's response evoked surprise, but served as a good reminder of the surreal athletic environment at Middlebury. If you're not an elite athlete yourself, you are likely in the midst of one. In 'Rural Geography', Capra was that elite athlete: a back-to-back endurance mountain bike national champion and member of the Middlebury College Cycling team.

Capra is not the only nationally-recognized rider on the team. Teammate Dani Bronk '28 earned Middlebury's first women's collegiate national mountain bike title with her Short Track victory in the fall of 2024 — a race in which Bronk and Capra jointly led the field for a quarter of the course's undulating grassy loops. Yet one can only fully appreciate their dominance in the saddle by understanding their similar cycling origin stories.

Having Nordic skied since fourth grade, Capra quit her team by her sophomore year of high school due to personal and overtraining-related struggles. However, a love for being outdoors, exploring and networking her surroundings remained. Much like a teen's sense of freedom when getting their driver's license, getting on the bike was liberating for Capra. A Steamboat Springs native, she found joy in feeling connected to her environment and in exploring Routt County, CO, as a whole.

"[Biking] feels different from the organized sports that I've always been in throughout my childhood... it's so expansive and there's so many places you can go. I'm not confined to a Nordic trail, I can ride my bike basically anywhere. It's freeing."

To help bring structure to training, Capra joined Avout Racing, a Denver-based cycling team. Capra was soon taking part in the biggest races in the United States, including the Pan-American Mountain Bike Championships in her senior year. Despite the major competitions and titles, Capra's motivation for staying on the bike has remained the same. "The reason I do it is because I just want to. It's not really results-driven."

Bronk likewise entered competitive cycling while transitioning from another sport. Having hoped to compete in DI alpine skiing, Bronk faced a decision: either take a gap year to improve her recruiting chances or move forward and try something else. "At that point, I wanted to explore other things within skiing, but then it was summer, so I just started biking," Bronk said.

The same zeal for exploration set in for Bronk, discovering gravel roads around her house that she never knew existed. Bronk joined Middlebury's team once she arrived on campus, taking the national crown in the Short Track her first semester. As with Capra, though, success doesn't define her relationship with cycling. "It's not even my college sport; it's just a hobby. We just go race on the weekends in the fall," Bronk said. This perspective has helped her avoid burnout, especially as she began cycling because of the burnout she felt with skiing.

Capra and Bronk's successes on the dirt and grass only tell part of Middlebury's cycling story. Mountain bike and cyclocross competitions take place in the fall, while road racing occurs in the spring. The transition to the pavement brings a different ethos of competition and a shift in athletes' personalities; part of this change was on display at UVM's Catamount Classic road race on Saturday, April 25.

A powerful aspect of cycling is its tendency to marry immense physical suffering with landscapes of profound natural beauty. Cyclists begin the 10.5-mile race loop at the Charlotte Central School, quickly diving downhill as Camel's Hump sinks into the horizon. Horses, chickens and sprawling farmhouses flank both sides of the road, and on the northerly and southerly legs of the course, the Adirondacks and Greens line up like spectators. The course climbs, falls and winds, and absent the antsy peloton, a gentle breeze and the distant sound of cars would put you to sleep sitting along its perimeter.

Peter Warner '27 and Herschel Brown '28 were Middlebury's two competitors in the men's field. Warner rode in the top-level 1/2/3 category, while Brown competed at the 3/4 level. In his debut road race, Warner placed ninth out of 27, finishing in just under two hours and 34 minutes. A varsity Nordic skier for Middlebury, Warner approaches cycling with the combination of a love for exploration and typical "Nordie," house music-bumping intensity.

"Cycling is mostly for fun," Warner said. "I get to do something hard, suffer-y." Part of embracing long road races — the 1/2/3s had to complete six laps, totalling 63 miles and nearly 5000 feet of climbing — is making "fun" synonymous with "hard." Brown adopts a similar mindset. "I enjoy the sightseeing, but I also just enjoy pushing myself a lot. I am definitely performance-oriented when I can be."

Brown rode farther than most on Saturday. In addition to completing the Mt. Philo hill climb race earlier that day, Brown biked from campus — a 37-mile commute — in an attempt to finish the day with 100 miles. "All I can think about is that I'm hurting a lot right now," Brown said.

Middlebury Cycling is a team without a coach, yet it has national champions among its ranks. It's a team that will go to nationals, but only if it can secure the funding. It's a group of athletes who love to explore, will go to the well to do so, and have built a community of others of the same adventurous bent. In many respects, Middlebury Cycling resembles any other team on campus, yet maintains its distinctive quirk — be it on grass, gravel or asphalt.

COURTESY PHOTO / KAI CADDY

Middlebury's cycling team excelled at the 2024 national championship, with Dani Bronk '28 claiming the Short Track title and Wren Capra '28 taking fourth in the same race.

COURTESY PHOTO / OFF THE FRONT MEDIA

Herschel Brown wins the men's 3/4 race at the West Point Criterium earlier this season.